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Volume 27, No. 7

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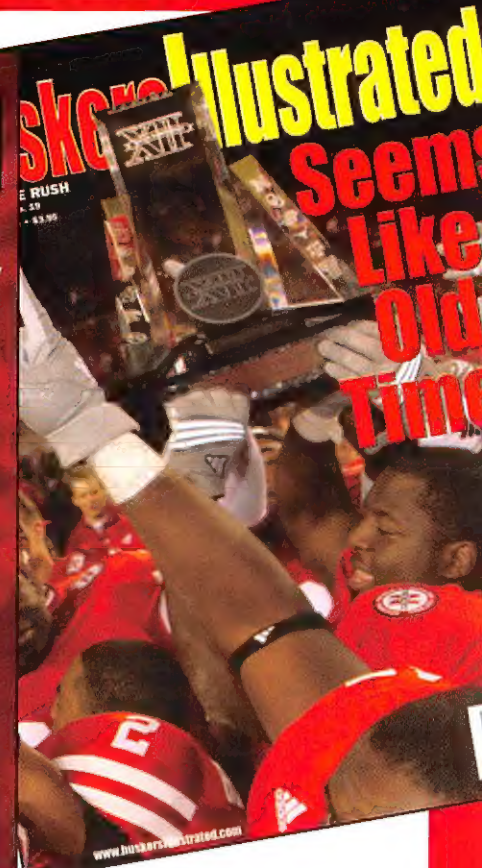
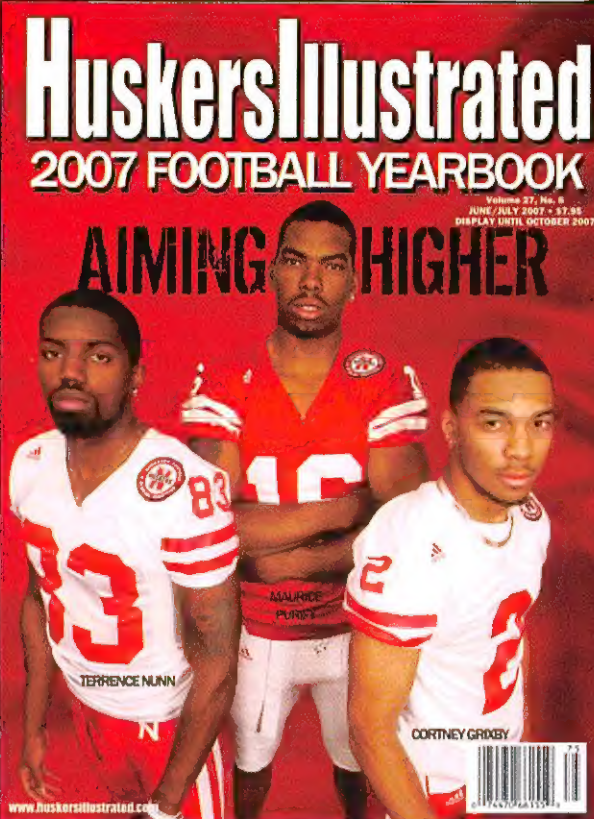
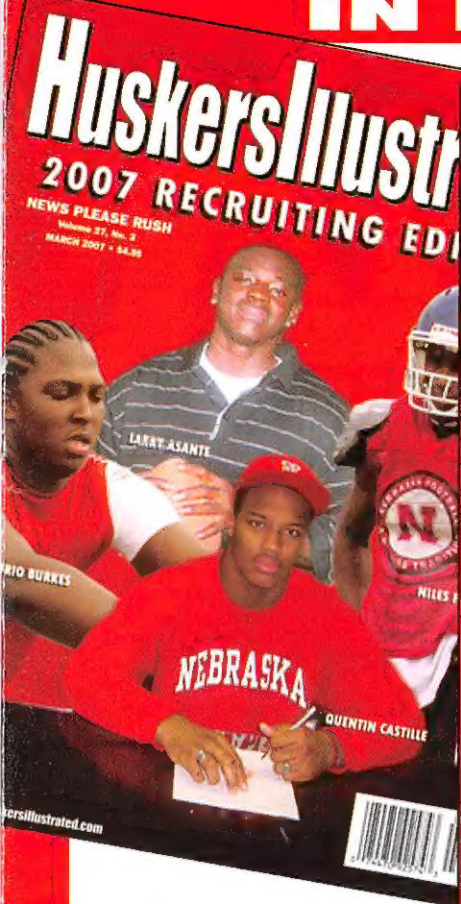
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## Tough Act To Follow

*Quarterback decision tops storylines entering Callahan's fourth season*



**Brian Hill**

THERE IT WAS, on the cover of this issue a year ago, the headline "On Zac's Shoulders."

The implication was that Nebraska's fortunes rode on the right arm of senior quarterback Zac Taylor.

Taylor would go on to pass for 3,197 yards and 26 touchdowns and win Big 12 Offensive Player of the Year honors. NU's 9-5 season was a lot about him but not entirely about him.

Fast forward to 2007. Most are assuming that senior Sam Keller will be the starting quarterback when the Huskers open the season by playing host to Nevada on Sept. 1. As a junior at Arizona State in 2005, Keller threw for 2,165 yards and 20 touchdowns in the first seven games before suffering a season-ending hand injury. After sitting out last season as a transfer, he was selected Big 12 Conference newcomer of the year in a preseason poll of media and named one of 35 finalists for the Manning Award, which is presented to college football's top quarterback.

But midway through fall camp, coach Bill Callahan had yet to name a starter. Keller and junior Joe Ganz had nearly identical statistics in the Spring Game, and the competition has continued into the fall.

"Keller or Ganz?" is one of five questions discussed in our season preview in this edition of *Huskers Illustrated*. As you'll see on the cover, junior guard Matt Slauson is featured in the first of our series of expanded player profiles.

### ON THE COVER

Bill Callahan and his fourth Nebraska football team opened fall camp Aug. 6, beginning preparations for the Sept. 1 opener against Nevada. Cover photo by Scott Bruhn.

We also initiate three other new sections, including "Chasing the Jet," a look at the all-time best receivers, as senior Terrence Nunn continues to climb on the all-time receptions list, topped by Johnny Rodgers. The others are "Lists," which leads off with a look at NU's lopsided openers, and "10 Years Ago," which looks back at some of the top stories in this magazine in 1997.

In addition to football, our August edition includes a look at the defending national champion Nebraska volleyball team, which was rated No. 1 in the preseason Top 25 for the third straight year. The Huskers have been No. 1 in 32 of the past 33 weekly polls dating back to the start of the 2005 season.

We also take a look at former NU pitcher Joba Chamberlain, who made national news with an impressive debut with the New York Yankees, and junior college transfer Ade Dagunduro, one of nine newcomers to basketball coach Doc Sadler's program.

If the latter name sounds familiar, Dagunduro is the brother of former nose tackle Ola Dagunduro, one of six defensive starters Nebraska must replace.

The Huskers also lost six starters on offense, including Taylor, who was back in Lincoln in August after being cut by the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. He couldn't be a coach or graduate assistant, as those positions were filled, but NU's quarterbacks appreciated his presence.

"Zac has tremendous knowledge of this offense, and obviously he's tested it under fire, so Zac being around is great," Keller said. "He's a great resource just to have as far as knowing where to go and what to do."

Ganz agreed. "He's still a great leader and still a down-to-earth guy," Ganz said. "It's going to be a real great help for both of us." ■



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# Huskers Illustrated

# CONTENTS

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8

## 8 SEASON PREVIEW

The Cornhuskers are poised to take another step this season. Nebraska began practice in early August with such expectations as a backdrop and the usual assortment of questions about the upcoming season, coach Bill Callahan's fourth. *By Mike Babcock*

## 14 FEATURING MATT SLAUSON

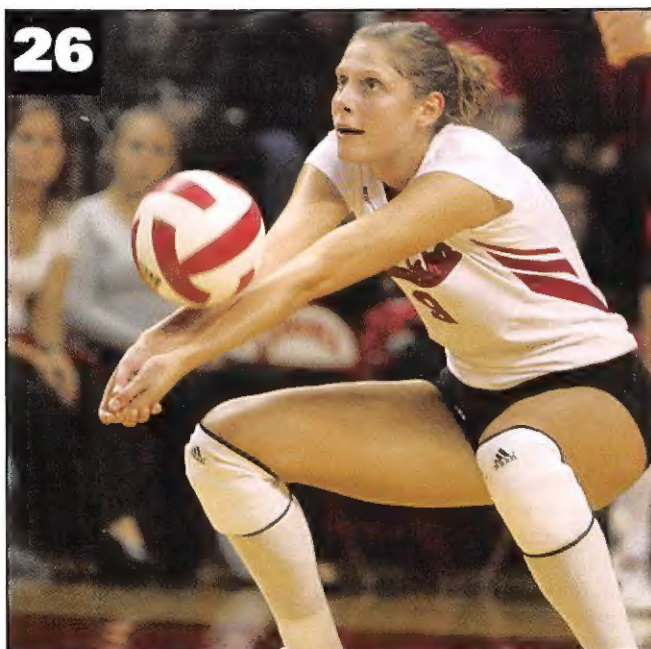
Matt Slauson and his dad, Rob, went on a road trip, checking out college football programs. Matt was looking for one in which he'd feel comfortable.

## NEXT ISSUE

The Nevada review/Wake Forest preview edition will be mailed on Sept. 4. Check for updates at [huskersillustrated.com](http://huskersillustrated.com).

## DEPARTMENTS

<b>Letter From The Editor</b> .....	4
<b>State Of The Huskers</b> .....	6
<i>Nebraska's players say they aren't upset that Missouri is the media's pick in the Big 12 North.</i>	
<b>From The Beat</b> .....	7
<i>Nevada is proud of what it's accomplished, but coach Chris Ault admits there is "so much more to do."</i>	
<b>10 Questions</b> .....	18
<i>Occasionally, Mike McNeill has to remind himself he's only a redshirted freshman.</i>	
<b>Chasing The Jet/Lists</b> .....	19
<b>Nevada Scouting Report</b> .....	20
<b>Recruiting</b> .....	22
<i>Nebraska's 2008 recruiting class is filling up fast.</i>	
<b>Volleyball</b> .....	26
<i>There was a time when Sarah Pavan would have rather stood on a hot bed of coals than speak in front of a crowd.</i>	
<b>Cross Country</b> .....	28
<i>Training in the Alaska weather helped Ari Goldstein develop her tough competitor's mentality.</i>	
<b>Basketball</b> .....	30
<i>Ola Dagunduro's brother also likes to play defense.</i>	
<b>Baseball</b> .....	32
<i>Joba Chamberlain's rise to the Yankees was rapid.</i>	
<b>Notebook</b> .....	34
<i>Nebraska coach Bill Callahan respectfully disagreed with the results of the Big 12 media preseason poll.</i>	
<b>Crossword Puzzle/Huskernutz</b> .....	36
<b>10 Years Ago</b> .....	37
<b>Final Word</b> .....	38





## Quiet Confidence

*Nebraska players say they aren't upset that Missouri is the media's pick*



**Terry DOUGLASS**

REPORTERS HOPING to coerce a little bulletin board material from the Cornhuskers at last month's Big 12 Conference football preseason media days came away empty.

While one might think members of Nebraska's contingent in San Antonio would've been offended by the fact that media types had picked Missouri to win the North Division, that didn't appear to be the case.

Instead, the Huskers' representatives — coach Bill Callahan and senior players (linebacker) Bo Ruud, (wide receiver) Terrence Nunn and (tight end) J.B. Phillips — reacted with quiet confidence to questions about what could easily be perceived as a slight to the defending North champions.

"It really didn't bother me," Ruud said. "I don't take that too seriously because I know what we expect and what kind of a team we are."

"I think we're going to make our own destiny in that department, so I'm not overly concerned with what the preseason picks are. I'm more concerned with when we meet them on the field."

Phillips said that the media's vote is just another "take" in a world that's already overrun with opinions and predictions.

"You hear a lot of different things, and that's just fine," Phillips said. "These days, it seems everybody's got an opinion, and everybody's got a blog where they can put their thoughts on it, but what it comes down to is that we're the ones who have to put on the pads and decide the games."

"How these things are voted isn't going to affect the way we play. We're not going to sit there and say, 'Well, we might as well not play this season because we weren't picked to win.' It doesn't work that way."

Nebraska returns seven offensive starters and five defensive starters from last year's 9-5 team that captured the North for the first time since 1999, going 5-0 against divisional foes. That included a 34-20 victory over the Tigers in early November at Lincoln that gave the Huskers an inside track in the division race.

Nunn sees no reason to believe that the Huskers can't repeat in the North.

"A lot of players on our team are very confident because we know the potential that our team has and what our team is capable of doing," Nunn said. "A lot of guys, including myself, are very confident about the upcoming season."

Another one of those guys is Callahan, who laughed, saying, "Personally, no, I don't agree with it," in regard to the preseason media poll. "But I love our football team, and I think they're capable of doing some great things."

In the annual survey of reporters covering the Big 12 Conference, Missouri edged Nebraska by a slim eight-point margin. However, the Tigers held the advantage in first-place votes by a 2-1 margin.

While Missouri coach Gary Pinkel said he was pleased to

see the Tigers apparently gaining some respect, he was quick to add that the respect needs to be earned on the field.

"Ultimately, to receive the respect you want to have, you have to win at a higher level than we've done," Pinkel said. "That being said, we're just going to focus and work hard to make it come true. We understand it's a long season, one game at a time, and I think that we have the potential to be pretty good, but we'll see."

Callahan is well aware of the factors that might have gone in to making the selections. Missouri owns a slight edge in returning starters, arguably possesses a more established returning quarterback in Chase Daniel, and there's also the perception that the Tigers will play a less difficult conference schedule — one that includes a bye week prior to hosting the Huskers on Oct. 6 at Columbia.

"I understand how it all works and why people make the decisions and do the things that they do," said Callahan, who noted that he doesn't figure his team will need to use the perceived slight from the media as motivation. "Motivation — we've got plenty of motivation with Nevada in the opening game."

Plenty of motivation and plenty of confidence — much of it gained by matching wits with some of the best teams in the country last season.

Of Nebraska's five losses, four came against top-10 ranked opponents. NU lost 28-10 to a No. 4-ranked Southern California squad on the road and fell to No. 8-ranked Oklahoma 21-7 in the Big 12 title game at Kansas City, but suffered narrow defeats against No. 5 Texas (22-20) at home and No. 10 Auburn (17-14) in the Cotton Bowl.

Only a lost fumble in the closing minutes kept Nebraska from upsetting the Longhorns.

"We know that we can play with any team now," Phillips said. "Now what we have to do is take that belief and put it up on the scoreboard."

While some might view this year's Nebraska-Missouri matchup as the battle that ultimately decides the North, Ruud isn't so sure.

"I think that there are some other teams in the North that you've got to watch out for. You can't look past any team," Ruud said. "Clearly, the game against Missouri is going to be a big one and probably the most-watched game in the North, without a doubt, and it's going to be a big game, but there's a lot of season left after that."

"We're going to have to play every team tough."

Callahan agreed. "I don't want to take anything away from Missouri, and I certainly wouldn't want to take anything away from any of the competitors in the Big 12 North," he said. "Hope springs eternal for everybody at this time of year, and it's going to be competitive. It's going to be exciting. It's going to be fun, and it's going to be interesting to see how it all shakes out." ■



**Tight end J.B. Phillips** is one of seven returning starters on offense.

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## High Hopes

*Nevada is proud of what it's accomplished, but coach admits there is 'so much more to do'*



**Curt McKEEVER**

CHRIS AULT ACKNOWLEDGES what seems to be the obvious — that his University of Nevada football team's offense will have some major adjustments to make in 2007.

For starters, three-year starting quarterback Jeff Rowe, who last season threw for 1,907 yards and 17 touchdowns, is now playing for the Cincinnati Bengals.

The team's top rusher (Robert Hubbard) and receiver (Caleb Spencer) also used up their eligibility in 2006, as did the team's two starting tackles.

On top of that, before fall practice began, Nevada's projected starting center, Dominic Green, broke his foot, and has been ruled out for the Wolf Pack's opening two games at Nebraska and Northwestern.

But if a heated incident during the second week of camp is any indication, the expectations in Reno remain just as high as the past two seasons, when Nevada compiled a 17-8 record, won a Western Athletic Conference co-championship in 2005 and made consecutive bowl appearances.

With Green sidelined, senior Kyle Robertson learned quickly just how much the coaches were counting on him to raise his level of play.

According to the Reno Gazette-Journal, near the end of an Aug. 9 practice, Robertson dribbled a snap to quarterback Colin Kaepernick and was then given an earful by offensive line coach Chris Klenakis. Robertson reacted by taking a swing at Klenakis, and players were forced to step in.

Robertson, of course, was kicked out of the rest of practice. The incident, though, was a clear signal that Nevada expects to take more steps to the ones that left it playing in the Sheraton Hawaii Bowl and MPC Computers Bowl the past two seasons.

"What we've tried to do at Nevada the last three years is to create an environment in which the players demand and expect from one another," said Ault, who is in the fourth year of his third stint with the Wolf Pack. "And I think we're certainly getting a better concept of what we're expecting. We told the kids that success doesn't search for you, it's all about hard work.

"... We are proud of what we have accomplished, but there is so much more to do."

The main project is the offense, which will be fueled either by third-year sophomore Nick Graziano (the only quarterback candidate who's thrown a pass for Nevada) or redshirt freshman Colin Kaepernick. Graziano played in eight games last season and completed 9 of 17 passes for 92 yards and a score.

Ault believes both players are better runners than the Wolf Pack have had recently at the position, and he plans to incorporate more of that into Nevada's "Pistol" spread sets.

In his team's first scrimmage of fall camp, Ault watched a defense that returns eight starters hold the offense to 3 total

yards over the first three possessions. But Graziano and Kaepernick rebounded to drive the offense to five touchdowns over a stretch of 13 possessions.

"I think our offense is going to be exciting," Ault said. "Now, we might be going the wrong way some times, but it's going to be exciting because I think they'll find a way to turn around and go the other way."

Nevada will lean heavily on Luke Lippincott to keep its running game productive. Lippincott moved over from safety last season to gain 456 yards and score nine touchdowns.

"We want him to be an every down back for us," Ault said.

If he can do that, the Wolf Pack's passing game ought to have a good chance to improve from last season, when Rowe ranked 18th nationally in completion percentage (64.7), but the team was just 74th in yards per game (187.4).

The only receiver missing from 2006 is Caleb Spencer, a second-team All-WAC pick who led the squad in receptions (55) and yards (564). So, if Klenakis can put together a solid

line (the past two years he's essentially gone with guards because he prefers playing the best five linemen regardless of position), whoever wins the quarterback job can expect to thrive.

Picked to finish third in the WAC by the league's coaches, and fourth by the media, Nevada will look to its defense to set the stage for what it plans on being a better finish.

Although the official number of returning starters is listed as eight, another six players have starting experience in that unit over the past year-and-a-half.

Nose tackle Matt Hines (33 tackles, 4.5 for loss) and outside linebacker Ezra Butler, who topped the team with 71 stops and 18 for losses, anchor a front seven that has five regulars back. Ault calls Butler "one of the finest players I've coached," and relies on the smaller Hines to often

plug more than one gap in the Wolf Pack's 3-4 look.

Nevada also has proven linebackers in Josh Mauga (56 tackles, three interceptions, two fumble recoveries last season) and Jeremy Engstrom (41 tackles, one interception, two recoveries).

In the secondary, the Wolf Pack return veteran safeties Jon Amaya (42 tackles and an interception as a freshman), who could wind up at cornerback, and Uche Anyanwu (29 tackles, 3 forced fumbles).

"My expectations are high," Ault said.

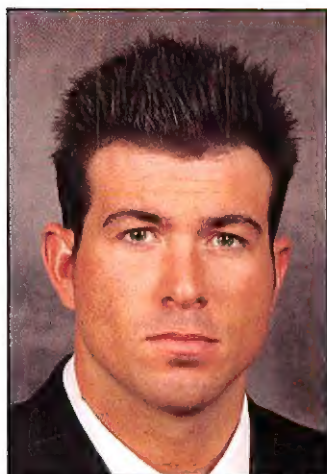
He was speaking of the defense. But considering that he expects the offense to be established by the beginning of WAC play, and the fact that punter Zach Whited (who averaged 39.1 yards last season) and Brett Jaekle (who converted 8 of 11 field-goal attempts) both return, Ault could have used that as his overall blanket statement. ■



**Chris Ault is in the fourth year of his third stint at Nevada.**

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Sam Keller

# QB



Joe Ganz

# Question

*Huskers hope to find the right answers  
in fourth year under Callahan*

**By Mike Babcock**

Here are five, of varying significance, depending on one's point of view.

### **SAM KELLER OR JOE GANZ?**

**T**he football program has made steady progress under Bill Callahan. The numbers show it. And the Cornhuskers are poised to take another step this season. "We say this is the year. We say we've been knocking on the door," said senior middle linebacker Corey McKeon.

They didn't embarrass themselves against Southern California last season. They nearly upset Texas. They won the Big 12 North and advanced to the conference championship game against Oklahoma, for the first time since 1999. And they battled Auburn to a standoff in the Cotton Bowl. "We've been banging around with the big dogs," McKeon said. "This is the year we start beating them."

Nebraska began practice in early August with such expectations as a backdrop and the usual assortment of questions about the upcoming season, Callahan's fourth.

Less than a minute into Callahan's pre-training camp news conference, following a brief opening statement, the question was posed: Who's the starting quarterback?

The question was predictable, and as such, elicited laughter.

"We're going to wait 'til the week before the Reno (Nevada) game to make that announcement," Callahan said. "We're going to let these guys go into training camp and compete."

"That's what it's all about, to get into an environment where you can compete and let your skills shine, let the best . . . let the cream come to the top, so to speak."

Despite Callahan's continuing claim that neither Keller nor Ganz had gained an advantage during spring practice, the consensus outside the team was, the job was Keller's.





Quarterbacks Patrick Witt (with football), Beau Davis (15), Zac Lee (3) and Joe Ganz (12) go through a drill during fall camp.

Keller himself dismissed such a belief.

"I would say that this is a legitimate quarterback situation, where both of us can be the guy," he said. "So you have to let that play out as long as you can until you know that guy has earned it. The most important part about this whole thing is that I have faith in the coaches.

"I trust them and so does Joe; I think I can say that Joe does as well."

The key to resolving the question of who will succeed 2006 "Big 12 Offensive Player of the Year" Zac Taylor is communication, managing the system, according to Callahan.

The emphasis would be on decision-making and fundamentals management.

"This offense isn't about making spectacular plays," said Ganz. "It's about being consistent. Moving the offense down the field and making crucial third downs; that's really what it's going to take.

"That's what the coaches are really going to look for."

Ganz planned to emerge as the starter, "so I'm really not looking toward my role of being the back-up, like I've been the last two years with Zac," he said. "But if he (Keller) does get the job, I'll just be the back-up, and I'll just be one snap away, like I have the last couple of years.

"I'll prepare the same way I have, and nothing will change."

The quarterback situation would work itself out in due time, under the direction of quarterbacks coach and offensive coordinator Shawn Watson, Callahan said. "I have no doubt about that.

"It's more important that the supporting cast elevates themselves, the receivers, our tight ends, our line, playing on the same page, communicating, everything that needs to get accomplished on a particular play. If we can elevate the communication of our football team, I'd be thrilled."

Even though the quarterback competition would attract the most attention, every position was going to be scrutinized. "We've got experienced guys, but we start all over again when we get into training camp," said Callahan. "We're at the bottom of the mountain, just trying to work our way up to the top.

"We don't assume anything. We don't take anything for granted."

## WHERE'S MAURICE?

Well, Purify won't be playing in the season-opener against Nevada.

In mid-July senior wide receiver was fined and sentenced to one year's probation for a pair of off-the-field incidents, including an altercation in a bar and a DUI. The day after his court appearance, he was reinstated to the team by Callahan, after serving a month-and-a-half suspension.

Purify participated in the final week of the summer conditioning program and was on the field for the start of training camp. But his punishment includes suspension for the Nevada game.

"I thought it was going to be way worse," Purify said after the first practice.

Missing most of summer conditioning was no small matter, though he did condition on his own. Plus, his teammates "embraced" him and "extended themselves to him," said Callahan. "They do like Maurice a lot. They love him to the extent where they want to see him have success and do great things.

"The unselfishness and selflessness of the guys on this team to go out and grab him and go throw every other day and work out with him and keep going and maintain his motivation was really big for us. I compliment our team. I



compliment Maurice for staying with it and continuing to move on."

Purify established himself as a big-play receiver in his first season as a Cornhusker, catching 34 passes for team highs of 630 yards and seven (receiving) touchdowns.

But concern for him has gone beyond what he can contribute on the field.

He has grown from the experience, Callahan said. "He's maturing."

Purify understands the seriousness of the matter. "I know that if I have a chance to get in the NFL, I lost a lot of money. Not only that, I might not get into the NFL because of that," he said.

"I understand I could lose a lot."

## WHAT'S UP FRONT?

The defensive front must be replaced, of course. Gone are Adam Carriker, Jay Moore, Ola Dagunduro and Barry Cryer, all of whom were in NFL training camps when Nebraska began practicing. "That's losing four pretty good defensive linemen," defensive coordinator Kevin Cosgrove said, understating.

But those who will replace them have played in reserve roles, some more than others, "and you can see that in the way they practice," Cosgrove said early in training camp.

"They're giving great effort. They're improving every day."

Still, people have a right to be skeptical, according to Ndamukong Suh. "We haven't had a chance to showcase everything we can do, so that's why everybody is going to have a question mark," the sophomore tackle said. "But it's our job to get in fall camp and get our work done."

Experience at line-backer helps, too, because "if there happens to be a mistake on the defensive line, they can help fill in. They know our plays and they know everywhere we're supposed to be. They're right there behind us, yelling in our ears about what we need to get



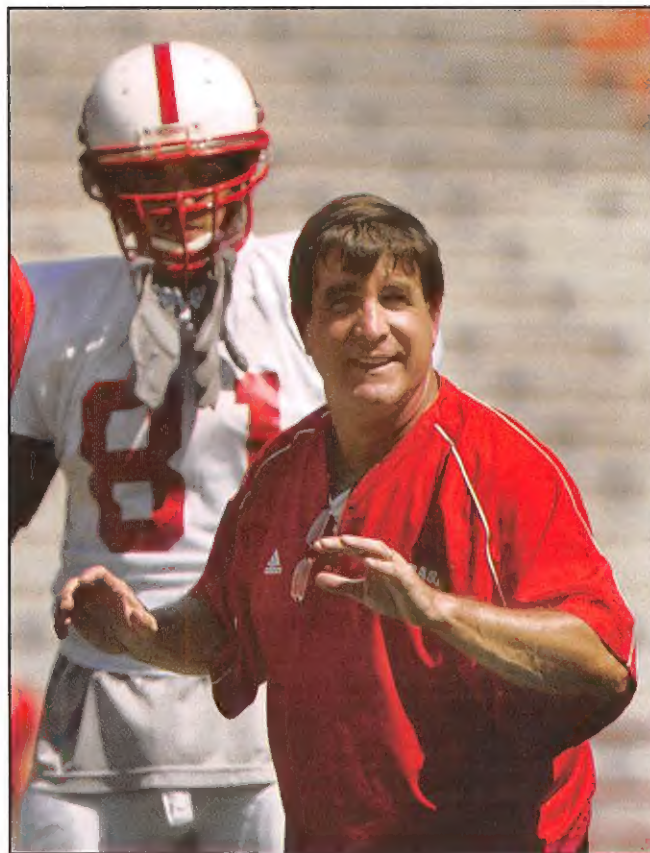
Ndamukong Suh

done," Suh said.

In addition, the defense has the flexibility with "hybrid" players such as Steve Octavien, Barry Turner and Clayton Sievers to give opponents multiple looks, including a 3-4 alignment.

"We've got players across the board that allow us to do that, get into the three-man line or four-man line or stay in the four-man line and give the three-man look," said Callahan.

"You like to be multiple in your fronts in this day and age. The more multiple you are, it creates problems. It can create a lot of confusion for an opponent. I like giving a team a lot of different looks. It makes an opponent prepare much harder and makes them simplify their package."



"If we can elevate the communication of our football team, I'd be thrilled," coach Bill Callahan said during fall camp.

## HOW'S MARLON?

Late in the Spring Game, Lucky was helped from the field with a knee injury. His immediate reaction? "I thought it was just next on the list of MCL's and ACL's," he said. "It was a scary moment because I felt pops. That's the only thing you think of: What's going to be next."

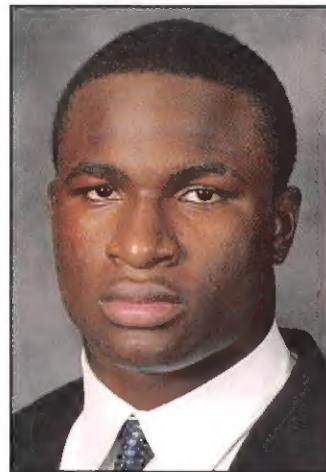
As it turned out, the knee was only sprained, much to Lucky's relief.

The junior I-back spoke to reporters on the first day of training camp, the first time he had done so since the Cotton Bowl game, addressing personal difficulties that included his being rushed to the emergency ward and hospitalized in February for an unspecified medical condition.

"It was real scary. I mean, it was a roadblock. I had to bust through it. I did it, and man, I feel strong. I was pretty immature the past two years. I just had to grow up, take one step at a time," he said.

"I'm 21 now, so I have to be a man." (He turned 21 at the end of February.)

He had to shoulder the burden of five-star expectations when he arrived from North Hollywood, Calif., along



Marlon Lucky





Safety Larry Asante (right), a mid-year junior college transfer, said he's been impressed with several of NU's freshmen.

with Harrison Beck the most high-profile member of his recruiting class. People "wanted me to come in and do what I did in high school," said Lucky. "I couldn't do that.

"It was hard, the way the game sped up and stuff."

Lucky has set the problems aside, according to Callahan. "I think he's dealt with it great," Callahan said. "He's in a very good frame of mind. He's put himself in position to be an outstanding player and contribute at a high level, so I'm really pleased with his progress."

## WHICH FRESHMEN WON'T REDSHIRT?

Though the question makes for interesting discussion, answering it early in training camp is next to impossible. I-back Marcus Mendoza and quarterback Patrick Witt had the advantage of enrolling at mid-year, of course. Witt would seem a likely candidate to redshirt because of his position, but even that decision needn't be made until well into the season, if not afterward.

So anyway, who among the freshmen were impressive early in training camp? According to sophomore safety Larry Asante, a mid-year junior college transfer, the list would have to include running back Quentin Castille, cornerback Prince Amukamara and wide receiver Niles Paul.

Castille, who reported at 255 pounds, complements Cody Glenn as a big back and could provide some versatility in alignments, according to Callahan. "We can utilize a personnel grouping that we call 'big backs' and put Cody and Castille in the same backfield," said Callahan.

"We can go to 'rocket backs' and use Castille and Marlon (Lucky) or Castille and Mendoza. There are a lot of variations that we're going to have to work through."

Amukamara was recruited as an "athlete" and would prefer to be playing offense. But he already had three interceptions early in training camp, according to Asante. "He's basically just learning. He hasn't even played that spot before," said Asante. "He's impressed me."

Paul began at the flanker or Z receiver spot. "He's got all the potential in the world," senior cornerback Andre Jones said. "He's a good guy, real humble, real quiet, handles his business, comes out here and gives a good effort every day. Every time I go against him, he gives a good effort."

"We go at it. Ain't no sympathy there."

Paul, a cousin of senior safety Tierre Green and nephew of former Cornhusker I-back Ahman Green, indicated he wanted to play right away. But whatever the coaches think best, he'll do, he said. ■



# FALL CAMP NOTES

## BOWMAN UPDATE

Senior cornerback Zack Bowman was continuing his rehabilitation after suffering a ruptured patellar tendon during spring practice when training camp began. "He'll be getting mental reps," said coach Bill Callahan. "It'll be day-to-day and . . . how much better he gets as we proceed through camp."

Bowman, who missed last season because of a torn ACL suffered in early August, was the only player injured in the spring who wasn't able to practice in training camp.

"I think Zack is going to work as hard as he can and train," said senior safety Tierre Green. "He obviously wants to come back as soon as possible. I'm sure he's not going to want to do anything that's going to hurt the team, as well as jeopardize his chances of being able to play the whole season."

"So I think coming back too early will be the wrong move for him."



Zack Bowman

## DOUBLE TAKE

Junior defensive end Barry Turner reported for training camp weighing 270 pounds. He's listed at 250 in the media guide, about the weight at which he played last season. He weighed 220 when he arrived as a freshman. Back then, "I couldn't imagine the weight being on me," he said of 270.

Friends he hadn't seen in a long time didn't recognize him, he said.

The additional size, without a loss of speed, will help him deal with the run as an every-down end instead of just a pass rusher. Last season, "I was criticized on not being able to play the run," Turner said. "But I played behind Jay Moore and Adam Carriker. I played limited, just on my special ability, which was pass rush. So now I gained the extra weight so I can make sure I can take on the run."



Barry Turner

## WOW, HE'S HUGE

Junior offensive tackle Lydon Murtha, who will be playing on the right side after playing left tackle his first two seasons, weighed 316 at the start of training camp. He expects to play at 312.

Freshman Prince Amukamara, who was recruited as an athlete and is beginning his career as a cornerback, singled out Murtha to illustrate the shock of the transition from high school to the collegiate level. "Gosh, he's 6-8, 312, and he had a 'six-pack,'" Amukamara said.

He didn't see linemen like Murtha in high school. "Definitely no," he said.

"I don't know if they drink beer, but they have beer beliefs."



Lydon Murtha

## LIGHTER IS BETTER

Three pounds can make a big difference. Ask junior I-back Marlon Lucky. He began camp at 208 pounds, after playing at 215 in the spring. And he expected to play at 204 or 205. Carrying all that weight was not for me," he said of the 215. "It was weighing down on me."

Even 208 seemed a bit too heavy. "I want to be faster," he said.

## OFF TO A GOOD START

Fifteen freshmen recruits were on campus and received scholarship aid for summer-school classes under a new NCAA rule. "That's tremendous," Callahan said.



Freshman offensive lineman Jaivorio Burkes tries to stay cool, with temperatures in the upper 90s the second week of fall camp.

So was the academic performance of those 15, who had a cumulative grade-point average of about 3.7, he said. That's "very impressive for a young group of kids to come in, show the maturity of a transition and then, of course, balance that with all the responsibilities and obligations they have."

"Their dedication is outstanding. I commend them on what they did in the classroom."

## WORK OUTSIDE IN

Four scholarship freshmen began training camp in the secondary, including three at cornerback: Prince Amukamara, Anthony Blue and Shawn Sullivan.

"We're going to start all those guys at corner and see what they can do on the edge, see what their skills are like and if need be, we'll move them inside (to safety)," said Callahan.

"But it's important for us to get the evaluation of their corner skills first before we make any declaration of a move or an adjustment into a slot, nickel back or dime back, for that matter."

Eric Hagg began at safety, and Latravis Washington, who was listed as a defensive back on letter-of-intent-signing day in February, started out as a WILL linebacker.

## FRESH PHIL

Sophomore middle linebacker Phillip Dillard redshirted last season after playing as a true freshman and then suffering a knee injury in the 2006 opener game against Louisiana Tech.

Dillard still wasn't full-speed in the spring, according to defensive coordinator and linebackers coach Kevin Cosgrove. "I see a big change from spring to now," Cosgrove said.

"He fought through it, but now he looks like he's back to normal."

That's good news, with the top four linebackers all seniors. "He's very important," said Cosgrove. "Phil has a lot of ability and . . . you're looking for that leadership from him (next season)."

"But we need him this year, too." ■



Phillip Dillard



# 2007 ROSTER

Source: Huskers.com

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown (school)	No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	Hometown (school)
95	Allen, Pierre	DL	6-5	265	RFr.	Denver, Colo. (Thomas Jefferson)	3	Lee, Zac	QB	6-2	210	So.	San Francisco, Calif. (Ignatius/ San Francisco City College)
21	Amukumara, Prince	DB	6-1	180	Fr.	Glendale, Ariz. (Apollo)	88	Lester, Ben	WR	5-10	160	Fr.	Tecumseh, Neb.
4	Asante, Larry	S	6-1	210	So.	Alexandria, Va. (Coffeyville, Kan., CC)	5	Lucky, Marlon	IB	6-0	210	Jr.	North Hollywood, Calif.
56	Barfield, Shukree	DT	6-4	310	Jr.	Camden, N.J. (Garden City, Kan., CC)	45	Makovicka, Justin	FB	6-1	235	RFr.	Brainard, Neb. (East Butler)
66	Barrett, Cruz	OL	6-4	325	RFr.	Daytona Beach, Fla. (Mainland)	63	Martin, Ben	DT	6-4	270	RFr.	Lincoln, Neb. (Southwest)
56	Baumgartner, Justin	LS	6-2	255	Jr.	Cheyenne, Wyo. (Chadron St./ Laramie Co., Wyo., CC)	59	Martin, Jay	LB	6-2	210	Fr.	Waverly, Neb.
57	Bergland, Dennis	OL	6-1	290	RFr.	Plattsmouth, Neb.	71	Maslin, Mike	OL	6-6	320	Fr.	Lincoln, Neb. (Southeast)
14	Blue, Anthony	DB	5-10	175	Fr.	Cedar Hill, Texas	36	May, Matthew	FS	6-1	195	Fr.	Imperial, Neb. (Chase County)
1	Bowman, Zackary	CB	6-2	200	Sr.	Anchorage, Alaska (Bartlett/ N.M. Military Institute)	79	McEwen, Robbie	LS	6-0	235	Jr.	North Platte, Neb. (Drake Univ.)
40	Brandenburgh, Lance	LB	6-1	230	Sr.	Overland Park, Kan. (Aquinas)	13	McKeon, Corey	LB	6-1	225	Sr.	Naperville, Ill. (North)
1	Brooks, Chris	WR	6-2	210	So.	St. Louis, Mo. (Hazelwood E.)	58	McNeil, Andy	LB	6-1	245	RFr.	Omaha, Neb. (Skutt)
72	Burkes, Jaivorio	OL	6-5	315	Fr.	Phoenix, Ariz. (Moon Valley)	44	McNeill, Mike	TE	6-4	225	RFr.	Kirkwood, Mo.
59	Byford, Brett	OL	6-3	300	Sr.	Hartselle, Ala.	32	Mendoza, Marcus	IB	5-10	185	Fr.	Houston, Texas (Spring Woods)
82	Cammack, Wes	WR	5-11	185	So.	DeWitt, Neb. (Tri County)	38	Moore, Kyle	LB	6-2	225	RFr.	Elkhorn, Neb.
58	Caputo, Mike	C	6-1	265	Fr.	Omaha, Neb. (Millard North)	90	Moore, Terrence	DT	6-3	275	Fr.	New Orleans, La. (McDonogh)
19	Castille, Quentin	RB	6-1	235	Fr.	La Porte, Texas	81	Mueller, Josh	TE	6-5	265	Sr.	Columbus, Neb. (Lakeview)
62	Christensen, Andy	OL	6-3	300	Jr.	Bennington, Neb.	5	Murillo, Armando	CB	6-0	195	Jr.	Tampa, Fla. (Robinson/ Eastern Arizona CC)
45	Covey, Nick	LB	6-2	240	So.	Glendale, Ariz. (Mount. Ridge)	76	Murtha, Lydon	OL	6-7	305	Jr.	Hutchinson, Minn.
94	Crick, Jared	DE	6-6	260	Fr.	Cozad, Neb.	77	Nicks, Carl	OL	6-5	330	Sr.	Salinas, Calif. (Hartnell JC/ New Mexico State)
6	Culbert, Major	IB	6-0	210	So.	Harbor City, Calif. (Narbonne)	83	Nunn, Terrence	WR	6-0	190	Sr.	Houston, Texas (Cypress Falls)
15	Davis, Beau	QB	6-4	180	Jr.	Venice, Calif.	33	O'Hanlon, Matt	S	5-11	200	Jr.	Bellevue, Neb. (East)
52	Dillard, Phillip	LB	6-1	250	So.	Tulsa, Okla. (Jenks)	82	O'Leary, T.J.	LS	6-1	245	Jr.	Omaha, Neb. (Millard North/ New Mexico State)
97	Dixon, Kevin	DT	6-3	295	Jr.	Vero Beach, Fla. (Sebring/ Garden City, Kan., CC)	15	Octavien, Steve	LB	6-0	240	Sr.	Naples, Fla. (Lely/ William R. Harper, Ill., College)
46	Eisenhart, Ben	S	5-11	200	Sr.	Culbertson, Neb.	24	Paul, Niles	WR	6-1	210	Fr.	Omaha, Neb. (North)
26	Erickson, Dan	WR	6-1	195	Sr.	Omaha, Neb. (Papio-LaVista)	17	Peterson, Todd	WR	6-4	210	Jr.	Grand Island, Neb. (Cent. Cath.)
74	Escamilla, Taylor	DL	6-1	275	Fr.	Fremont, Neb. (Bergan)	85	Phillips, J.B.	TE	6-3	245	Sr.	Colleyville, Texas (Heritage)
92	Fahle, Tyrone	DL	6-3	260	RFr.	Virginia Beach, Va.	69	Picou, Jordan	OL	6-2	305	Sr.	Rialto, Calif. (Eisenhower/ Mt. San Antonio, Calif., CC)
27	Ford, Ryan	DB	5-11	175	So.	Winfield, Ala.	98	Potter, Zach	DE	6-7	280	Jr.	Omaha, Neb. (Creighton Prep)
50	Franzluebbbers, Ben	DL	6-5	245	Fr.	Dodge, Neb.	86	Poulosky, Andy	DE	6-2	255	Sr.	Ponca, Neb.
12	Ganz, Joe	QB	6-1	200	Jr.	Palos Heights, Ill. (Stagg)	16	Purify, Maurice	WR	6-4	220	Sr.	Eureka, Calif. (San Francisco City College)
41	Gillaspie, Aaron	FB	6-2	235	RFr.	Littleton, Colo.	85	Rice, Thomas	DE	6-1	240	Sr.	Lincoln, Neb. (East)
11	Gilleyleen, Curenski	WR	6-0	210	Fr.	Leander, Texas	84	Rucker, Xavier	WR	5-6	160	RFr.	Minneapolis, Minn. (Breck)
39	Glassman, Dan	TE	6-4	245	RFr.	Omaha, Neb. (Creighton Prep)	51	Ruud, Bo	LB	6-3	235	Sr.	Lincoln, Neb. (Southeast)
34	Glenn, Cody	IB	6-0	230	Jr.	Rusk, Texas (Rusk)	48	Sand, Andy	FB	6-2	230	Sr.	Lincoln, Neb. (Southeast)
30	Green, Tierre	S	6-1	200	Sr.	Omaha, Neb. (Benson)	57	Sayre, Jeff	LB	6-3	210	Fr.	Barrington, Ill.
2	Grixby, Cortney	CB	5-9	170	Sr.	Omaha, Neb. (Central)	42	Senske, Matt	FB	6-3	245	Sr.	Bellevue, Neb. (East)
41	Grove, Thomas	LB	6-2	190	Fr.	Arlington, Neb.	88	Sievers, Clayton	DE	6-4	245	Jr.	Elkhorn, Neb.
28	Hagg, Eric	DB	6-1	195	Fr.	Peoria, Ariz. (Ironwood)	70	Slauson, Matt	OL	6-5	335	Jr.	Colorado Springs, Colo. (Air Force Prep)
75	Haines, Victory	OL	6-7	290	Sr.	Logan, Utah (Snow, Utah, College)	65	Smith, Mike	OL	6-6	285	RFr.	Las Vegas, Nev. (Palo Verde)
7	Hardy, Frantz	WR	6-1	190	Sr.	Miami, Fla. (Washington/ Butler County, Kan., CC)	35	Stafford, Austin	LB	6-2	205	Fr.	Hayward, Calif.
80	Harvey, David	DE	6-4	255	So.	La Plata, Md. (McDonough)	43	Steinkuhler, Ty	DL	6-3	285	Jr.	Lincoln, Neb. (Southwest)
10	Helu, Roy	RB	6-0	220	Fr.	Danville, Calif. (San Ramon)	91	Such, Michael	P	6-2	205	RFr.	Allen, Texas
90	Henery, Alex	PK	6-2	170	RFr.	Omaha, Neb. (Burke)	93	Suh, Ndamukong	DT	6-4	305	So.	Portland, Ore. (Grant)
8	Henry, Will	WR	6-5	210	RFr.	El Paso, Texas (J.M. Hanks)	18	Sullivan, Shawn	DB	5-10	190	Fr.	Brenham, Texas
67	Hickman, Jacob	OL	6-4	285	So.	Bakersfield, Calif. (Centennial)	84	Sullivan, Tony	DE	6-3	240	Sr.	Wahoon, Neb. (Neumann)
80	Hill, Ryan	TE	6-3	220	Fr.	Arvada, Colo. (West)	87	Swift, Nate	WR	6-2	200	Jr.	Hutchinson, Minn.
86	Hill, Sean	TE	6-3	250	Sr.	Lisle, Ill. (Naperville North)	46	Tasa, Ben	TE	6-4	230	RFr.	Humphrey, Neb. (St. Francis)
4	Holt, Menelik	WR	6-4	215	So.	San Diego, Calif. (St. Augustine)	89	Teafatiller, Hunter	TE	6-3	230	Jr.	Kingsburg, Calif. (San Joaquin)
61	Huff, Mike	OL	6-4	300	Jr.	Ralston, Neb.	3	Thenarse, Rickey	DB	6-0	190	So.	Los Angeles, Calif. (Jordan)
79	Iske, Cory	OL	6-2	260	Fr.	Omaha, Neb. (Millard West)	37	Thomsen, Kevin	FB	6-2	245	Fr.	Elkhorn, Neb.
91	Jensen, Seth	DT	6-3	295	RFr.	Fort Morgan, Colo.	39	Thorell, Lance	IB	6-1	180	Fr.	Loomis, Neb.
96	Johnson, Brandon	DT	6-3	315	Sr.	Chicago, Ill. (Graceland/ Compton, Calif., CC)	97	Titchener, Dan	P	6-0	200	Jr.	Cheyenne, Wyo. (East)
25	Jones, Andre	DB	6-0	190	Sr.	Fort Walton Beach, Fla. (Choctawhatchee/Fresno City, Calif., CC/Kentucky)	99	Turner, Barry	DE	6-3	250	Jr.	Antioch, Tenn. (Brentwood)
73	Jones, D.J.	OL	6-5	310	RFr.	Omaha, Neb. (Central)	63	Valburg, Ethan	OL	6-2	265	Fr.	Fullerton, Calif. (Troy)
78	Jones, Marcel	OL	6-7	300	Fr.	Phoenix, Ariz. (Trevor Browne)	23	Washington, LaTravis	LB	6-3	210	Fr.	Bradenton, Fla. (Bayshore)
9	Keller, Sam	QB	6-4	230	Sr.	Danville, Calif. (San Ramon/ Arizona State)	24	Watson, Adam	DB	6-0	185	RFr.	Lincoln, Neb. (Niwt, Colo.)
19	Kester, Tyler	CB	6-1	205	Sr.	Clearwater, Neb.	37	Wesch, Jake	PK	6-1	200	Jr.	North Bend, Neb.
54	Koehler, Colton	LB	6-1	230	So.	Harvard, Neb.	22	West, Anthony	DB	6-0	195	RFr.	San Diego, Calif. (Point Loma)
20	Kunalic, Adi	PK	6-0	175	Fr.	Fort Worth, Texas (N. Crowley)	68	Williams, Keith	OL	6-5	310	RFr.	Florissant Hill, Calif. (McClure North)
12	Lawrence, Blake	LB	6-2	210	Fr.	Shawnee Mission, Kan. (West)	9	Wilson, Bryan	S	6-1	205	Sr.	Granada Hills, Calif. (Pierce, Calif., College)
36	Lawson, Thomas	FB	6-0	240	Jr.	Parker, Colo. (Ponderosa)	27	Wilson, Kenny	IB	6-0	220	Sr.	Liberal, Kan. (Butler County, Kan., CC)
29	Lee, Daniel	PK	6-0	195	Jr.	Kansas City, Mo. (Park Hill South/Vanderbilt)	6	Witt, Patrick	QB	6-4	220	Fr.	Wylie, Texas
							53	Wortman, Tyler	LB	6-3	230	Jr.	Grand Island, Neb. (Cent. Cath.)
							47	Yancy, William	DE	6-4	230	Fr.	Glendale, Ariz. (Ironwood)
							49	Young, Dreu	TE	6-4	220	RFr.	Cozad, Neb.



2007 Huskers



**MATT SLAUSON**  
Offensive Guard



# Something Told Him This Was The Place

By MIKE BABCOCK ● PHOTOS: SCOTT BRUHN

**S**ometimes things just work out. There's no explaining why.

The spring of 2005, somewhere in central Kansas, mid-afternoon . . .

Matt Slauson and his dad, Rob, were on a road trip, checking out college football programs. Matt was looking for one in which he'd feel comfortable, one that suited his needs.

Letter-of-intent-signing day had come and gone, more than a month before, when Matt left Air Force Prep School in Colorado Springs, right before spring break, and set out with his dad.

Except for a stop at Colorado State, their visits were to Big 12 schools, including Colorado, Kansas State, Kansas and Oklahoma State. They had just been to Stillwater, Okla.

Matt and his dad traded off driving, and he was taking a turn at the wheel while his dad napped. He was "jamming out," he said, maybe to Ronnie Milsap, though he's not sure.

But Milsap is his favorite singer, so that's a safe bet. The song might have been "Daydreams About Night Things" or, better yet, "Please Don't Tell Me How the Story Ends."

No way could Matt have imagined how this story would end.

Nebraska hadn't been high on his list at the beginning of the trip. He had never much cared for the Cornhuskers, in the way some baseball fans dislike the New York Yankees, for instance. He didn't know a lot about Nebraska football, just that it had always been nationally prominent.

Matt hadn't grown up in Big 12 territory, actually. He began high school in Sweet Home, Ore., a community of some 8,000 in the western part of the state, mid-Willamette Valley.

Such a background seems inappropriate for a 6-foot-5,

330-pound offensive lineman who wore a 40-pound buffalo hide duster with a bear-fur collar and buffalo-skin hat topped off with a bear-claw necklace out of the locker room following Nebraska's 37-14 victory against Colorado last season.

A friend loaned him the duster and encouraged him to wear it to Memorial Stadium. Bill Callahan told him he would have to wait until afterward, however. No sense insulting the opposition.

Truth is, Slauson's intent wasn't to insult anybody, not really. He wanted to have some fun with high school classmates who attended Colorado and gave him a hard time about Nebraska.

OK, there was the matter of his considering going to Colorado, though only briefly. When he said he also was considering Nebraska, "they weren't very courteous to me," he said. The problem was he said he was considering Nebraska after visiting Lincoln. "I don't remember the exact four-letter words that were used. I'm like, 'All right, I'll see you later.' I didn't talk to them much after that."

Anyway, the Slauson family moved to Colorado Springs before his senior year in high school, another instance of things working out for reasons difficult to explain. An older brother, Chris, went to the Air Force Academy and "it seemed like somebody in our family had almost died," Matt said.

He maintained contact by phone "every couple of weeks." But his mom called his brother just about every night because "it just seemed like something was missing," he said.

One day his dad, a school administrator, returned from a conference on education in Portland, Ore., and asked his mom what she would think about moving to Colorado Springs.

Don't even joke about that, she said. He wasn't joking, Matt's dad replied. The superintendent of schools in Colorado Springs had offered him a job. So the family left Sweet Home.

"If we wouldn't have moved, I'd probably be at the





University of Oregon right now," said Matt. And, he added with a smile, if he were in Eugene, he wouldn't be having nearly as much fun.

But back to central Kansas and the father-son road trip . . .

As the Nebraska border drew closer, Slauson experienced an odd sensation. "I was like, 'Something isn't right here. I'm getting really excited before I even see this place,'" he said.

Maybe it was because he was tired, weary of the monotonous drive, broken only by the music, whether Milsap or some other country singer appropriate to the geography.

With that inexplicable sensation as a lead-in, Slauson was immediately impressed by what he saw at Nebraska. And when he and his dad pulled out of Lincoln heading west, he said he had made up his mind. He wanted to play for the Cornhuskers. "And my dad goes, 'Thank you,'" he said.

Nebraska was equally interested in him. The problem was it had no scholarships available. "So I was like, 'All right,'" said Slauson. "But really, I knew I was going to come here the whole time."

Even if it meant he would have to sit out a semester as a grayshirt he was coming to Nebraska. "It turns out they found a scholarship for me at the last second," he said.

"So because of that I was considered a late commit."

He got a late start compared to the freshman scholarship recruits who spent the summer in Lincoln preparing for the season. The first day of training camp "I was so scared," he said.

Everyone looked like a senior, and out to get him because he was new. Also, he stood out because of his size. So "they knew that I was going to be an easy target for them," he said.

He began hanging out with young players, among them Jacob Hickman, who did grayshirt, and Craig Roark, who has since left the program, and tried to stay away from the older players. He did his best to maintain a low profile. He had heard stories "about old times" and hazing of freshmen.

He kept his mouth shut and did what he was told, the value of which he learned at Air Force Academy Prep. During basic training there in



Matt Slauson (70) has started 14 games in his first two seasons at Nebraska.

**"I don't think I could play center, but if they put me at wideout or something, I'd do it."**

**— Matt Slauson**

July, following graduation from Air Academy High, he lost 43 pounds in 18 days, he said, dropping from 335 to 292, "not very healthy."

And that was without having to do many disciplinary push-ups. Silence was golden on that count. There were push-ups aplenty in the normal course of a day.

He became friends as well with Lydon Murtha, a redshirted freshman, during training camp in 2005. "We're basically the same type of person. We like to joke around, have fun, but be serious when it comes time . . .

be in the spotlight," said Murtha. Oh yes, they're also roommates.

They keep their apartment "tidy," Murtha said, "about once a month."

Slauson's family also is in Lincoln now, except for Chris, who flies C-17's in the Air Force. His dad is the principal at Southwest High School. His other brother, Nick, is a cook at a local restaurant. And his sister, Alli, is a freshman at Nebraska, working at the university rec center.

His mom, Nancy, "just manages all of us," he said. "And trust me, it's a full-time job."





His parents regularly visited practice during training camp, despite oppressive heat and humidity. And having them in Lincoln provides him a haven on those rare days when he's down.

One night during the first week of training camp, upset because of a poor practice, he stopped home for the better part of an hour, "just hung out with my parents," he said.

"It's great because I get an opportunity to do that."

He's still not sure why he got excited about visiting Nebraska as he and his dad were driving through Kansas that day back in the spring of 2005. Maybe it was all of the driving they had done. "I don't know," he said. "When it gets late into fall camp or summer conditioning, I feel like I was delirious."

Delirious or not, he doesn't regret the decision that would eventually follow.

"I have a lot of fun here, for the most part," he said.

Things have worked out very well. They just do sometimes. ■

# Done Moving?

He's a tackle.  
He's a guard.  
He's a tackle.  
He's a guard.

Left guard, on the right side, is the position he'd play — for now. "Matt's anchored in there," Olinchuker offensive line coach Dennis Wagner said the first week of training camp. "But Matt knows that at any time we can move him to right tackle if we had an injury and we didn't feel like a redshirt freshman was quite ready."

The redshirted freshman is whom Wagner was referring to: OJ Jones and Mike Smith, back up to junior Lydon Martin, the projected starter at right tackle.

Shannon, second-year All-Big 12, started last season's first 11 games at right tackle before suffering an ankle injury and surrendering the job to Carl Nicka for the last three games.

When he returned to practice, Shannon found himself at guard, no big surprise since he had walked there some five previous spring drills. The always known I don't have a tackle frame. I'm always known I have a guard frame," said Shannon. "But just because I played tackle my whole life, coming into guard was much different in much more thinking because you're the one calling all the calls."

In the spring, he settled in at right guard, with Nicka moving to left tackle, and Martin, who started six games over the past two seasons at left tackle, moving to right tackle.

Nebraska's offensive line philosophy, however, doesn't allow for absolutes. The only set position is center — Brett Byford won't be moving to guard any time soon. And though center is set, "any

time you see 100 guys to snap," Wagner said.

Shannon isn't one of those five or six, however. "I don't think I would play center," he said, adding with a laugh. "But if they put me at widow or something, I'd do it."

The difference between guard and tackle is significant. "The guard position is pretty much a true match every play, whereas tackle is kind of like a dance with Shannon. Tackle, you're going against a 240-pound guy who is hitting just you, so you have to get back really quick and that kind of motion can be gone around. If he goes in on you, it turns into a traffic jam. Guard, you're just firing out. You're trying to blow him up before he has a chance to blow you up."

Not that tackles aren't physical. "There's just more initial contact inside," Wagner said.

Guards are "a little more square-bodied like me, whereas tackles have a little longer legs and they're a little quicker in typically, they have to be smaller, lighter," said Shannon. "The only reason I worked out as a tackle is because it took the defensive ends about a week to run around me."

He has finally settled in at the position to which he is called. "I think so," he said.

Never say never, though. "He did a pretty darn good job at tackle for us, so I would hate to say that he's just a guard," Wagner said. "Like I said, just because you're a right guard, if the right guard goes down, that doesn't mean the next right guard is going to be the next best player."

"If you've been the back-up left tackle and you're the sixth-best guy, you go to right guard." ■



# 10 QUESTIONS



**O**ccasionally, Mike McNeill has to remind himself he's only a redshirted freshman. His first year at Nebraska was frustrating because of injuries, including to a shoulder which required surgery in December. If not for the injuries, well, he might have contributed as a true freshman.

That's speculation, of course. Four tight ends played regularly last season, catching a combined 35 passes for 336 yards and 10 touchdowns. But Bill Callahan's offense places a premium on tight ends that can catch and stretch the field . . . which McNeill apparently can do. Callahan was profuse in his praise of McNeill's potential as a pass receiver at Big 12 Media Days in San Antonio.

So McNeill might have played. "I think it was a possibility," he said.

In retrospect (emphasis added), however, "redshirting was good, definitely."

And, best of all, he has four years of eligibility remaining.

"I would definitely say you feel older even though you're just a redshirt freshman," he said. "You're more in tune to the system. You don't have the nervousness of a true freshman but you're still young."

## **What's the best thing served at the training table?**

"Last night we had crab legs. That was pretty good. But I like the pasta with shrimp in it. That would probably be my favorite. I like most seafood. You can get that (pasta with shrimp) every day for lunch if they don't have omelets. So you can get it a lot."

## **If your life were made into a movie, who would you pick to play the part of you?**

"A lot of people say I look like Josh Hartnett, so maybe him. One of my teammates compared me to Jim Carrey, so I don't know, Josh Hartnett or Jim Carrey. I'd go with Josh Hartnett because he's a little better looking than Jim Carrey."

## **What's the best movie you've seen recently?**

"I see like every movie that comes out. Gosh, '300.' I really liked, 'Shooter.' I saw 'Transformers'; that was good. I just saw 'I Now Pronounce You Chuck and Larry.' Anything new that looks good, but I would say '300' and 'Shooter.' I just bought '300' on DVD. I like every type of movie. I just saw 'Bourne Ultimatum,' too. That was OK."

## **If you could excel at any collegiate sport except football, what would it be?**

"Basketball, I played that in high school. Actually, the other one I would play would be golf. I'm not very good at it, but I love playing golf. I think golf would be good on your body, first of all. You'd have a long career. I just think it's fun."

## **Other than Nebraska, what collegiate football team has the best helmets?**

"Oregon because they have like five different helmets. I like



Florida State. I've always liked their helmets. And I don't know if I'm supposed to say this but Texas; I like the Longhorn. My dad went there."

## **What's your favorite television show?**

"People are probably going to laugh when I say this, but I watch 'Planet Earth.' It's on the Animal Channel. It's pretty cool footage. Otherwise, 'SportsCenter.' I'm not much of a TV guy."

## **If you could spend 15 minutes with a celebrity, sports or otherwise, whom would you pick?**

"Jeremy Shockey, I'd just want to see what he had to say. He seems like a crazy guy. He's always been my favorite player, either him or . . . I don't know, that would probably be one guy I would choose."

## **What do you remember about the first Nebraska football game you ever attended?**

"During recruiting I got to do the Tunnel Walk. It was on my official visit. Coming out, everyone was chanting recruits' names. I came on a really big weekend, too, with other recruits. The student section was going nuts, chanting everyone's name. Just the game itself was amazing. I took a tour around the school and people were coming up to me like, 'Hey, Mike, we'd love to have you.' And I'm like, 'Oh my gosh.' I thought that would be more normal for a guy who's like a five-star. If you're a five-star or a two-star, whoever you are, they're nuts about the recruits."

## **If you were a contestant on Star Search, what would your talent be?**

"I don't know if I could do it anymore but I used to be able to play the saxophone pretty well. I took a bunch of lessons when I was younger. I don't know that I have too many talents that are unusual. I guess I would say the saxophone."

## **What book would you recommend for someone to read?**

"I'm not much of a book guy, but I would definitely go with the Harry Potter series. Those are about the only books I've read. I liked them. I read three, and the fourth one was like 1,000 pages, and I didn't even bother trying to read it. But I liked those books and I saw the movie, so I would recommend that." ■





(Johnny Rodgers' career-receiving records, once seemingly unbreakable, are likely to fall in the not-too-distant future, under an assault facilitated by coach Bill Callahan's West Coast offense. This season, Huskers Illustrated takes a look at the all-time best receivers, as senior Terrence Nunn continues to climb on the all-time receptions list, topped by Rodgers.)

## JOHNNY RODGERS (1970-72) No. 20 5-9, 173 Omaha, Neb.

Rodgers, a high school All-American at Omaha Tech, aspired to be a tailback at Southern California. But the Trojans didn't offer a scholarship, so he became a Cornhusker and rewrote not only the receiving sections but also the kickoff- and punt-return sections of the school record book. During his three seasons (freshmen weren't eligible for varsity competition), the Cornhuskers were a combined 32-2-2 with back-to-back national championships and he set 41 school records. He also set four NCAA records. Without the threat he represented as a kick returner, Tom Osborne has said, Nebraska would not have gone 13-0 and won its second national championship in 1971. Rodgers was a two-time All-American, three-time first-team all-conference selection and Nebraska's first Heisman Trophy winner in 1972. Many still regard him as the greatest Cornhusker of all-time, 35 years after his career ended. Oh yes, he made the most of an opportunity to play tailback in his final game at Nebraska, also Bob Devaney's final game as coach. A surprise starter at I-back against Notre Dame in the 1973 Orange Bowl game, Rodgers rushed for three touchdowns, caught a touchdown pass and threw a touchdown pass in a 40-6 victory. ■

## LOPSIDED OPENERS

(Modern era, post-World War II)

9-4-93	North Texas	76-14
9-19-64	South Dakota	56-0
9-14-74	Oregon	61-7
9-22-62	South Dakota	53-0
9-21-63	South Dakota State	58-7
9-20-52	South Dakota	46-0
9-13-80	Utah	55-9
8-30-97	Akron	59-14
9-5-87	Utah State	56-12
8-31-95	at Oklahoma State	64-21

## (Pre-World War II)

10-7-11	Kearney State	117-0
10-6-17	Nebraska Wesleyan	100-0
10-1-98	Hastings	76-0
9-24-04	Grand Island	72-0
10-7-22	South Dakota	68-0
10-1-10	Peru State	66-0

## IGNOMINIOUS OPENERS

(Nebraska has failed to win its opening game only 10 times since 1955)

9-17-55	Hawaii	0-6
9-21-57	Washington State	12-34
9-19-59	Texas	0-20
9-20-69	USC	21-31
9-9-72	at UCLA	17-20
9-11-76	at LSU	6-6
9-10-77	Washington State	10-19
9-2-78	at Alabama	3-20
9-12-81	at Iowa	7-10
9-7-85	Florida State	13-17

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## 2007 SCHEDULE

(2006 record in parentheses)

- 1 Sept. 1 Nevada (8-5), 2:30 p.m., ABC
- 2 Sept. 8 @Wake Forest (11-3), 11 a.m., ESPN
- 3 Sept. 15 USC (11-2), 7 p.m., ABC
- 4 Sept. 22 Ball State (5-7), TBA
- 5 Sept. 29 Iowa State (4-8), TBA
- 6 Oct. 6 @Missouri (8-5), TBA
- 7 Oct. 13 Oklahoma St. (7-6), TBA  
(Homecoming)
- 8 Oct. 20 Texas A&M (9-4), TBA
- 9 Oct. 27 @Texas (10-3), TBA
- 10 Nov. 3 @Kansas (6-6), TBA
- 11 Nov. 10 Kansas State (7-6), TBA
- 12 Nov. 23 @Colorado (2-10), 11 a.m., ABC
- Dec. 1 Big 12 Championship  
at San Antonio, Texas, 7 p.m., ABC

### Big 12 At A Glance

Thursday, Aug. 30

Kent State at Iowa State

Saturday, Sept. 1

Missouri vs. Illinois (St. Louis)  
Nevada at Nebraska  
Baylor at TCU  
Oklahoma State at Georgia  
Montana State at Texas A&M  
North Texas at Oklahoma  
Kansas State at Auburn  
Arkansas State at Texas  
Central Michigan at Kansas  
Colorado State vs. Colorado (Denver)

Monday, Sept. 3

Texas Tech at SMU

Saturday, Sept. 8

Miami (Fla.) at Oklahoma  
Nebraska at Wake Forest  
Fresno State at Texas A&M  
TCU at Texas  
UTEP at Texas Tech  
Colorado at Arizona State  
Florida Atlantic at Oklahoma State  
Missouri at Mississippi  
Northern Iowa at Iowa State  
Rice at Baylor  
San Jose State at Kansas State  
Southeastern Louisiana at Kansas

### GAME 1

Nevada

Sept. 1

Location: Reno, Nev.

Enrollment: 16,500

2006 record: 8-5

Coach: Chris Ault, 23rd year

Series: First meeting

2:30 p.m. CDT, ABC

Memorial Stadium, Lincoln, Neb.



#### Player to Watch

Senior linebacker Ezra Butler, a first-team All-WAC selection, led the Wolf Pack with 71 tackles, including 17.5 for losses, which ranked No. 18 nationally. He added 7.5 sacks, one interception, one forced fumble and two fumble recoveries.



Butler finished with 75 tackles as a sophomore in 2005.

#### Quick Facts

**Chris Ault**, the only active coach to be enshrined in the College Football Hall of Fame, is entering the fourth season of his third stint as head coach. He has a 185-78-1 record in 22 years.

**Nevada** was picked to finish third in the WAC coaches poll and fourth by the media. The Wolf Pack is coming off an 8-5 season (tied for third in the WAC), which ended with a 21-20 loss to Miami in the MPC Computers Bowl in Boise, Idaho.

**Junior center Dominic Green**, one of 46 players nationally on the watch list for the Rimington Trophy, suffered a broken foot during the summer and is expected to miss at least the first two games. Senior Kyle Robertson, who started fall camp as the replacement, was dismissed from the team after an altercation with an assistant coach.

### ON DECK

#### At Wake Forest Sept. 8

Location: Winston-Salem, N.C.

Enrollment: 4,321

2006 record: 11-3

Coach: Jim Grobe, 13th year

Series: Nebraska leads 2-0

11 a.m., ESPN

Groves Stad., Winston-Salem, N.C.





## TENTATIVE 2-DEEPS

### NEBRASKA OFFENSE

WR	87	Nate Swift**	214	214	0
		Todd Peterson	214	214	0
LT	77	Carl Nicks	214	214	0
		Mike Smith	214	214	0
LG	62	Andy Christensen*	214	214	0
		Keith Williams	214	214	0
C	59	Brett Byford*	214	214	0
		Victory Haines	214	214	0
RG	70	Matt Slauson*	214	214	0
		Mike Huff*	214	214	0
TE	76	Lydon Murtha**	214	214	0
		D.J. Jones	214	214	0
		J.B. Phillips	214	214	0
		Josh Mueller**	214	214	0
		Terrence Nunn**	214	214	0
		Frantz Haroy*	214	214	0
		Sam Keller*	214	214	0
		Joe Gantz*	214	214	0
		Matt Sanks*	214	214	0
		Thomas Lawton*	214	214	0
		Marlon Lucky*	214	214	0
		Cody Glenn*	214	214	0
		Alex Henry*	214	214	0

### NEBRASKA DEFENSE

DE	99	Berry Turner**	214	214	0
		Clayton Slivers**	214	214	0
NT	93	Ndamukong Suh*	214	214	0
		Brandon Johnson*	214	214	0
DT	43	Ty Clements*	214	214	0
		Shukree Barfield	214	214	0
DE	98	Zach Potter**	214	214	0
		Pierre Allen	214	214	0
		Bo Rudd*	214	214	0
		Kyle Moore	214	214	0
		Corey McKeon**	214	214	0
		Phillip Dillard*	214	214	0
		Steve Octavien	214	214	0
		Lance Brandenburg**	214	214	0
		Cortney Gribby**	214	214	0
		Armando Munillo	214	214	0
		Pierre Green**	214	214	0
		Bryan Wilson	214	214	0
		Larry Asante	214	214	0
		Rickey Thomas*	214	214	0
		Andre Jones*	214	214	0
		Anthony West	214	214	0
		Dan Titchener*	214	214	0

### NEVADA OFFENSE

ST	62	John Bander	214	214	0
		Clayton Johnson	214	214	0
		Charles Mante	214	214	0
		John Herrera	214	214	0
		Josh Catapano	214	214	0
		Darin Ruiz	214	214	0
		Greg Hall	214	214	0
		Brad Eskew	214	214	0
		Alonzo Durham	214	214	0
		Mike Gallardo	214	214	0
		Adam Bishop	214	214	0
		Junior Pulokas	214	214	0
		Arthur King	214	214	0
		Chris Wellington	214	214	0
		Kyle Sammons	214	214	0
		Jack Darlington	214	214	0
		Mike McCoy	214	214	0
		Marko Mitchell	214	214	0
		Nick Graziano	214	214	0
		Colin Kaspernick	214	214	0
		Luke Lippincott	214	214	0
		Brandon Fragger	214	214	0
WR	75	Brett Jackie	214	214	0

### NEVADA DEFENSE

DE	94	Mundree Clifton	214	214	0
		Jay Dixon	214	214	0
NG	57	Matt Hines	214	214	0
		Nate Agalava	214	214	0
		Erica Clark	214	214	0
		Daniel Agalava	214	214	0
		Jeremy Engstrom	214	214	0
		Nate Furr	214	214	0
		Joshua Mauge	214	214	0
		Jared Silva-Purcell	214	214	0
		Kevin Porter	214	214	0
		Jerome Johnson	214	214	0
		Ezra Butler	214	214	0
		Dontay Meach	214	214	0
		Shannon Sevon	214	214	0
		Kenny Vister	214	214	0
		Uche Anyanwu	214	214	0
		Mike Samples	214	214	0
		Jonathan Amaya	214	214	0
		Justin Jackson	214	214	0
		Paul Pratt	214	214	0
		Devon Walker	214	214	0
		Zacary Whited	214	214	0

## THE PAUL FELL PREDICTION

# NEBRASKA vs. NEVADA



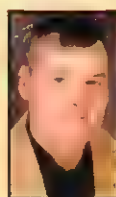
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## Picks

Sept. 1



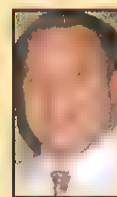
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**Nevada**  
@Nebraska

Nebraska 34,  
Nevada 10

Nebraska 45,  
Nevada 3

Nebraska 31,  
Nevada 13

Nebraska 41,  
Nevada 17

Nebraska 35,  
Nevada 17

**Kansas State**  
@Auburn

Auburn 27,  
Kansas St. 13

Auburn 31,  
Kansas St. 10

Auburn 24,  
Kansas St. 10

Auburn 31,  
Kansas St. 7

Auburn 42,  
Kansas St. 7

**Missouri**  
vs. Illinois

Missouri 30,  
Illinois 15

Missouri 21,  
Illinois 17

Missouri 28,  
Illinois 20

Missouri 41,  
Illinois 31

Missouri 35,  
Illinois 21

**Wake Forest**  
@Boston College

Wake Forest 23,  
Boston Coll. 17

Wake Forest 28,  
Boston Coll. 27

Boston Coll. 13,  
Wake Forest 7

Wake Forest 24,  
Boston Coll. 21

Wake Forest 28,  
Boston Coll. 17

**Last Week**  
Season

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# Filling Up

**Nebraska's 2008 recruiting class is getting close to completion**

**By Rick Shaw**

**A**s the Nebraska football team began preparations for its season-opening game against Nevada, the Huskers' 2008 recruiting efforts were nearing completion. With more than five months remaining until Signing Day in February, NU was holding strong with 20 oral commitments for next year's recruiting class.

Never before in their history have



Detroit recruit Jonas Gray is rated the No. 4 running back in the nation by Rivals.com.

the Cornhuskers been so close to completing their recruiting class at the start of fall. As with previous years in

the Callahan regime, Nebraska has managed to put together a fine mixture of talent that blends athletes from both the high school and junior college ranks.

Over the summer, Nebraska added the pledges of some talented offensive skill position players. Several in the group have the potential to make immediate impacts for the Huskers in 2008.

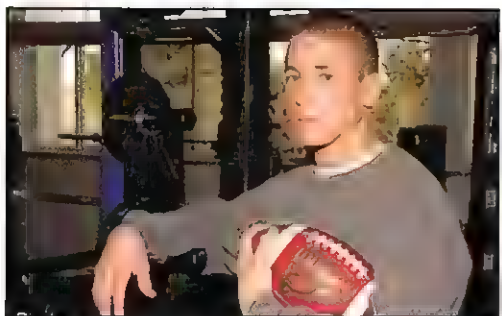
Jonas Gray, a 5-foot-10, 213-pound running back out of Detroit (Country Day) is one of the more highly regarded rushers in the country. Rated the No. 4 running back and the No. 36 player overall by Rivals.com, Gray used a blend of outstanding speed (4.4-second 40-yard dash) and power to rush for 1,252 yards and 19 touchdowns as a junior. He chose the Huskers over offers from Michigan, Florida, Michigan State, Louisville and others.

## NEBRASKA COMMITMENTS FOR 2008

Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	40	Hometown (School)
Will Compton	LB	6-2	214	4.5	Bonne Terre, Mo. (North County)
Sean Fisher	LB	6-5	210	4.6	Omaha, Neb. (Millard North)
Blaine Gabbert	QB	6-4	226	4.65	Ballwin, Mo. (Parkway West)
Bryce Givens	OL	6-6	257	5.1	Denver, Colo. (J.K. Mullen)
Jonas Gray	RB	5-10	213	4.44	Detroit, Mich. (Country Day)
Eric Harper	DE	6-4	220	4.62	Marrero La. (John Ehret)
Ricky Henry	OL	6-4	300	5.2	Omaha, Neb. (Burke/North Dakota State College of Science)
Tyson Hetzer	TE	6-7	265	4.75	Glendora, Calif. (Citrus CC)
Adrian Hilburn	WR	6-2	190	4.4	San Francisco, Calif. (City College of SF)
Dan Hoch	OL	6-6	295	5.21	Harlan, Iowa
Keelan Johnson	DB	6-0	195	4.5	Mesa, Ariz.
John Levorson	ATH	6-4	185	4.55	Crete, Neb.
Shaun Mohler	LB	6-3	225	4.6	Costa Mesa, Calif. (Orange Coast CC)
Collins Okafor	RB	6-1	210	4.54	Omaha, Neb. (Westside)
Darius Parish	DT	6-3	325	5.08	Wichita, Kan.
Doug Rippy	LB	6-2	218	4.6	Columbus, Ohio (McKinley)
Baker Steinkuhler	OL	6-6	290	4.88	Lincoln, Neb. (Southwest)
David Whitmore	DB	6-2	190	4.5	Port Arthur, Texas (Memorial)
Josh Williams	DE	6-4	220	4.8	Denton, Texas (Ryan)
D.J. Woods	WR	6-0	169	4.35	Strongsville, Ohio

For more daily recruiting information, visit [HuskersIllustrated.com](http://HuskersIllustrated.com), a member of the Rivals.com network.





Wide receiver prospect D.J. Woods of Strongsville, Ohio, committed to Nebraska in late July.

"I chose Nebraska because of the personable staff, the excellent facilities and the college football atmosphere," Gray said. (It was) just the overall tradition of winning on and off the field, the excellence and tradition, that led to my decision for Nebraska."

Another top prospect from Big Ten country, wide receiver D.J. Woods from Strongsville, Ohio, delivered his pledge to Nebraska during the heat of the summer. The 6-0, 170-pounder chose the Huskers over offers from Ohio State, Penn State, Auburn, Iowa and others.

Woods earned first-team all-district honors as a junior, hauling in 35 catches for 750 yards and eight touchdowns. He also scored four times on kick and punt returns. Woods, a participant at Nebraska's summer camp, runs a consistent 4.35-second 40-yard dash.

"They said that I would be a deep guy and a home run guy," Woods said. "I'm going to be the guy that catches the hit and sprints after the catch. I'm going to get hit and stay on my feet and make plays and make touchdowns and make yards after the catch."

Adrian Hilburn, a 6-2, 190-pound fleet-footed receiver out of City College of San Francisco also joined the Nebraska class. Hilburn, a teammate of current NU quarterback Zac Lee, chose the Huskers over a scholarship offer from Tennessee.

Hilburn finished his freshman year with six touchdowns and 366 yards on 27 receptions for a 13.6 yards per



Adrian Hilburn

## RECRUITING NOTES

# Reinforcements at Linebacker

By Sean Stevens

**W**hen spring practices begin in 2008, Nebraska will be without four senior linebackers. Three-year starters Bo Ruud and Corey McKeon will finish their eligibility, along with Steve Octavien and Lance Brandenburgh. Consequently linebacker is a position of emphasis for the 2008 recruiting class.

NU has already secured oral commitments from three high school prospects and one junior college player.

Sean Fisher (6-foot-5, 210 pounds) from Omaha (Millard North), Doug Rippy (6-2, 218) of Columbus, Ohio, and Will Compton (6-2, 214) of Bonne Terre, Mo., are the high school prospects.

Compton is ranked by Rivals.com as the No. 13 outside linebacker and among the top 250 players at all positions nationally. His 4.5-second speed in the 40-yard dash is intriguing athletically, but it's his passion for the Husker program that really stands out.

"It's so unbelievable. I'll be saying in a few years that I went to Nebraska, and I was a Blackshirt. It doesn't get much better than that," he said.

Fisher is a Husker legacy. His father Todd played for NU in the 1980s, but that didn't mean Fisher was a lock to follow him to Lincoln. He considered offers from Arkansas, Iowa, Oklahoma and Wisconsin, among 16 Division I schools before committing to Nebraska.

Fisher is ranked by Rivals.com as a three-star prospect and the No. 3 player in Nebraska.

Rippy — also a three-star prospect and the 48th-best outside linebacker according to Rivals — chose NU over offers from Illinois, Indiana and Michigan State, among others. He recorded 148 tackles as a junior — his first year of playing football.

Rippy also has great speed with a recorded 4.53-second 40-yard dash at a Pittsburgh camp. He chose Nebraska sight-unseen in late June and then took an unofficial visit to Lincoln in July.

"It was great, just awesome," Rippy said. "The coaches were great, the atmosphere was wonderful, the academic support is very nice, and it was just all pretty cool. Everything was what I expected and a little bit more."

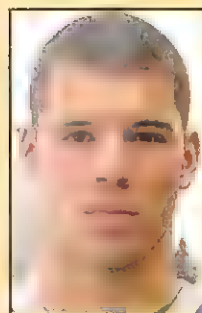
Shaun Mohler of Orange Coast Community College in Costa Mesa, Calif., is the junior college linebacker. Although Rivals has not released its initial junior college rankings, Mohler is expected to get four stars and be among the top linebackers available.

He recorded 99 total tackles with 16 for loss and four sacks in 2006 at Orange Coast and will be expected to contribute immediately in Lincoln. He's thrilled with that possibility.

"I can't wait to play . . . they have some linebackers leaving," he said.

● Of course everything is not always rosy in recruiting. Rivals.com's No. 3-ranked offensive guard — Elkhorn's Trevor Robinson — made an oral commitment to Nebraska in early April but the home-state product had a change of heart in early July and reopened his recruitment. The 6-foot-6, 300-pounder took additional unofficial visits to Notre Dame and Michigan and has yet to make a final choice.

"Right now, I'm just looking at everything closely before I make my final decision," he said. "I want to make sure I do things right this time, so I don't have to go through something like this again." ■



Sean Fisher





Tight end recruit Tyson Hetzer (44) played basketball at Shasta College in Redding, Calif.

catch average. He will have three years to play two for the Huskers.

Tyson Hetzer was one of the more interesting recruiting stories for the Huskers during the summer. The 6-7, 265-pound tight end prospect out of Citrus Community College in Glendora, Calif., was offered a scholarship by Nebraska despite not playing football since his senior year in high school. Hetzer, who possesses good footwork for his size and has run a 4.75-second 40-yard dash, played one year of junior college basketball at Shasta College in Redding, Calif., before transferring to Citrus to play football. He'll have two years to play two when he arrives in Lincoln.

Nebraska also dipped into the junior colleges to land some help in the offensive trenches. Former 2006 Husker signee, Ricky Henry of the North Dakota State College of Science, re-delivered his pledge to the NU coaching staff in mid-summer.

Henry, an all-state lineman for Omaha Burke High School in 2006, chose Nebraska over offers from Colorado and Houston. Slated for center, Henry will have three years to play two when he gets to Lincoln.

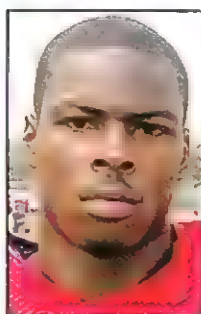
On the defensive side of the ball, Nebraska reached into the talent-laden state of Louisiana to get a commitment from athletic defensive end prospect Eric Harper. The 6-4, 220-pound athlete out of John



Eric Harper



John Levorson



Keelan Johnson

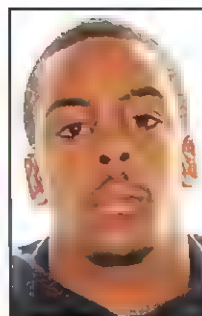
Ehret High School in Marrero, La., chose the Huskers over scholarship offers from Texas A&M, Mississippi State, Tulane and Louisiana Tech.

"I've been coaching here for over 20 years, Ehret head coach Billy North said, "and I don't put a lot of bull crap to people. When I say Harper's a great player, he really is. All the majors wanted him as an inside linebacker, and he has the frame to get up to 250-260 easily. He's quick (4.62 40) and could eventually even end up being an edge guy."

Another Husker summer camp attendee, defensive back Keelan Johnson of Mesa, Ariz., said yes to a Nebraska offer in mid-July. As a junior in 2006, the 6-0, 195-pounder earned first-team all-region offers as a running back after rushing for 1,100 yards and 20 touchdowns. He'll likely start his Husker career as a safety.

Johnson chose Nebraska over a scholarship offer from Arizona.

In-state star John Levorson delivered his pledge to the Nebraska coaching staff in mid-June. The 6-4, 185-pound athlete from Crete High School, was the Class B Player of the year as a junior. As a starting quarter-



Josh Williams



Darius Parish

back, he passed for 1,580 yards and 17 touchdowns and added another 756 yards and nine touchdowns on the ground while leading Crete to the 2006 Class B State Championship. He also added seven interceptions as a starting cornerback on defense.

Levorson chose Nebraska over offers from Wyoming and Ohio. He is slated to start his career in Lincoln at safety.

Defensive tackle Darius Parish is the largest member of Nebraska's recruiting class to date. Though massive, the 6-3, 325-pound lineman from North High School in Wichita, Kan., also can get up field, running a consistent 5.0-second 40-yard dash.

Parish chose Nebraska over offers from Colorado State and Kansas and was beginning to capture the interest of several other Division I programs.

Josh Williams, a 6-4, 220-pound defensive end out of Ryan High School in Denton, Texas, chose the Huskers over scholarship offers from Oklahoma State, Texas Tech, Arkansas, Missouri, Arizona and others. Rated the No. 55 player in the Lone Star State by Rivals.com, Williams earned all-district honors as a junior after racking up 68 tackles, including 22 tackles for loss and six sacks.

In addition, Nebraska also secured the commitments from four linebacker prospects (see Recruiting Notes) over the hot summer months.

Nebraska will likely look to secure commitments from five to seven more prospects between now and the first week of February. The 2008 class is, already, largely complete and positioned to be ranked in the top 15 classes in the country by most recruiting publications. It truly was, a busy and productive summer for the Husker coaching staff. ■

**For more daily recruiting information, visit [huskersillustrated.com](http://huskersillustrated.com), a member of the Rivals.com network.**





The 2006 national champion Nebraska volleyball team was honored during a visit to the White House in June and posed with President George W. Bush. Pictured (from left) are athletic director Steve Pederson, Sarah Pavan, Jordan Larson, Maggie Griffin, Dani Busboom, Rachel Holloway, President Bush, Rachel Schwartz, Dani Mancuso, Amanda Gates, Kori Cooper, Christina Houghtelling, Tracy Stalls, head coach John Cook and head assistant coach Lee Maes. (White House photo by Joyce N. Boghosian)



# Looking fo



## ***Award-winning Pavan, Huskers have a tough act to follow in 2007***

**By Todd Henrichs**

**T**here was a time, head coach John Cook recalls, when Sarah Pavan would have rather stood on a hot bed of coals than speak in front of a crowd.

Maybe it's maturity, or maybe it's because Pavan has grown so accustomed to giving award speeches this offseason that Nebraska's senior All-American now seems as comfortable at a podium as she is smashing volleyballs across a net.

"If you could have heard her speech when she accepted the Honda Award, you wouldn't have believed it was the same person," Cook said, referencing just one of the major awards that Pavan has received in the past year.

She was MVP of the NCAA final four in Omaha and the nation's volleyball player of the year last season. This summer, she received the Honda-Broderick Cup as the nation's top female student-athlete from all sports. Then came the Big 12 Female Athlete of the Year Award and recognition as the Academic All-American of the Year.

If there's any room left on the mantle, Pavan still has her senior season to play.

"Those are all tremendous accomplishments, and the great thing is how she credited her teammates and everyone who has supported her here," Cook said. "In many ways, they all share in these awards."

None more than the national championship that Nebraska won last season, an accomplishment that might forever rank as the ultimate for Pavan in her years as a Husker. The player who once shied from the spotlight off the court loves to be in the middle of things when she's in action.

As Nebraska prepares to make its run for a repeat title this season, it's evident that Pavan will not be satisfied with anything less.

"Last season was a perfect season. Winning

Entering her senior season, Sarah Pavan is already among the most decorated players in NCAA volleyball history.



# r More

a national championship was the reason we all came to Nebraska," Pavan said. "We've reached that goal, and all the awards we've received have been unbelievable, and it will be very difficult to top that."

"I think the only thing that we can do is try to do it all again. We have a very motivated team."

Not mincing words, Cook said that Nebraska's senior class, which includes Pavan, All-Americans Christina Houghtelling and Tracy Stalls and setter Maggie Griffin, has a chance to leave a legacy as impressive as any in volleyball's history.

Pavan, destined to become Nebraska's first four-time first team All-American, isn't the only national player of the year among this year's Huskers. Houghtelling won that honor as a junior back in 2005 before sitting out last year with an injury.

Houghtelling is expected to be back to full speed as Nebraska prepares for a nonconference schedule that includes matches against Penn State, Hawaii and potentially UCLA.

Stalls, a four-year starter, has a combination of talent, instincts and leadership ability unmatched in Nebraska volleyball lore. And Griffin, who transferred after starting at Michigan State her freshman year, has played a role in Nebraska advancing to the national championship match in her two seasons in Lincoln.

Add in two more All-Americans in returning junior outside hitter Jordan

Larson and sophomore setter Rachel Holloway, championship-match veterans in junior libero Rachel Schwartz and middle blockers Kori Cooper and Amanda Gates, along with a touted freshman class, and you have the makings of something special.

"It's a tremendous opportunity to be able to play at a level where our team is at," Pavan said. "I get to go to practice and play with the best players in the country every day. Not everybody can say that."

Winning this year's title won't be as simple as putting a talented lineup on the floor, however. The national landscape is as talented as ever with Stanford, Penn State, Texas, USC, UCLA and Florida all capable of contending for the title.

And Nebraska won't have the luxury of playing the most important post-season matches in front of the home-state fans. This year's final four is set for Sacramento, Calif. The regionals that will determine the national semifinalists are set for Florida, Wisconsin, Penn State and Stanford.

It's a big stage, but one Pavan can wait to perform on.

"We're just going to work our hardest to prove that we are the best team in the country," Pavan said. "I love competing, so I'm excited to get back into the game." ■

*Todd Henrichs covers the Nebraska volleyball team for the Lincoln Journal Star. He can be reached at 473-7439 or [thenrichs@journalstar.com](mailto:thenrichs@journalstar.com)*

## HUSKERS, WHO ELSE?

Coach John Cook's defending national champion volleyball team is the favorite to win the Big 12 championship for a third consecutive time and the ninth time in the past 11 seasons, according to the conference coaches. The Huskers received 10 of a possible 11 first-place votes.

Coaches are not allowed to vote for their own teams. Texas received the other first-place vote. The coaches' poll: Nebraska (100 points), Texas (91), Missouri (68), Texas A&M (66), Colorado (62), Iowa State (57), Kansas State (54), Baylor (42), Oklahoma (31), Kansas (23), Texas Tech (11).

No surprise also in the coaches' pick for player of the year, Nebraska senior Sarah Pavan, one of five Huskers on the coaches' preseason all-conference team. The others were seniors Christina Houghtelling and Tracy Stalls, junior Jordan Larson and sophomore Rachel Holloway. ■



Sarah Pavan was named the nation's top female student-athlete.

## 2007 SCHEDULE

### AVCA Showcase At Qwest Center Omaha

Aug. 24	vs. Tennessee	8:30 p.m.
Aug. 25	vs. UCLA or Utah	6/8:30 p.m.

Holiday Inn Classic NU Coliseum/Qwest Center Omaha		
Aug. 31	vs. Creighton (NU)	7 p.m.
Sept. 2	vs. Penn St. (Omaha)	3 p.m.
Sept. 3	vs. Cal Poly (NU)	5 p.m.

Ameritas Players Challenge NU Coliseum		
Sept. 7	vs. Duke	7 p.m.
Sept. 8	vs. New Mexico St. or Louisville	4:30/ 7 p.m.

(Home matches at NU Coliseum, unless noted)		
Sept. 12	Texas	7 p.m.
Sept. 15	@Texas Tech	TBA
Sept. 22	Texas A&M	TBA
Sept. 26	@Kansas	7 p.m.
Sept. 29	Baylor	TBA
Oct. 3	Kansas State	7 p.m.
Oct. 6	@Colorado	7:30 p.m.
Oct. 10	Iowa State	7 p.m.
Oct. 13	@Oklahoma	TBA
Oct. 17	@Missouri	6:30 p.m.
Oct. 20	Kansas	TBA
Oct. 21	Hawaii (Devaney)	5 p.m.
Oct. 24	@Texas	6:30 p.m.
Oct. 31	Missouri	7 p.m.
Nov. 3	@Kansas State	7 p.m.
Nov. 7	Colorado	7 p.m.
Nov. 11	@Iowa State	3 p.m.
Nov. 14	@Texas A&M	6:30 p.m.
Nov. 17	Oklahoma	7 p.m.
Nov. 21	@Baylor	6:30 p.m.
Nov. 24	Texas Tech	7 p.m.

### Nov. 29-Dec. 2 NCAA First/Second Rounds At Campus Sites

### Dec. 7-8 NCAA Regionals At Campus Sites

### Dec 13-15 NCAA Final Four At Sacramento, Calif.





Ari Goldstein finished 13th in the Big 12 Championships as a sophomore. She ended the season with a team-leading 22nd-place finish at the NCAA Midwest Regional.

# In All Kinds of Weather

*Running in Alaska helped Goldstein develop her competitor's mentality*

**BY KATELYN KERKHOVE**

**I**t was difficult for Ari Goldstein to get her workouts in during high school. The Nebraska cross country and distance runner wanted each run to be intense, but lacing up her shoes sometimes meant adding ice grippers to the bottoms so she wouldn't slip on snow-covered sidewalks.

Growing up in Soldotna, Alaska, winters lasted much longer than those in the Midwest, forcing

Goldstein — who refused to let up on her training — to run in temperatures as low as minus-10 degrees and to not get back on a track until April.

"I was born and raised in Alaska, so that's all I ever knew," Goldstein said. "I just thought that running in the winter all the time was just the way it was."

While her runs may not have been as intense as they would have been elsewhere, she said the weather helped her develop her tough com-

petitor's mentality, showing her that she could go for a run no matter what the conditions. In the end, she "just learned to deal with it," she said of the snow and ice.

With the help of her high school coach, Mark Devenney — who had previously been an assistant with the Cornhusker track and field team — Goldstein was recruited by and soon committed to Nebraska. She moved to Nebraska in 2005.

Devenney is back at Nebraska, too, by the way, as a volunteer assistant with the track and field team.

Looking back, Goldstein said her move to the heart of the United States "was more of a trade-off than a transition." Instead of dealing with below-freezing temperatures, she had to get used to training earlier.

"With the heat, you definitely have to go earlier in the morning, and that



can be just as hard on your body," the junior said. "But I would definitely train in the heat because when it's cold outside, there is no way to avoid it. You never get really warmed up, and you are always worried about slipping and falling."

In her time as a Husker, Goldstein has worked her way up on the women's cross country squad, and she was voted captain for the 2007 season.

She helped lead last year's team to its best showing since 1997 — a second-place finish at the Big 12 Conference meet. Goldstein ran her finest race there as well, placing 13th with a time of 21:33.76. She also placed in the top 20 in four of Nebraska's seven meets last season, including first-place finishes at both the Creighton/UNL Classic and the Woody Greeno Invitational.

"(Conference) was kind of the first race that we realized that we could do some big things," Goldstein said. "And I think some of that momentum will carry us into this year."

Looking to the 2007 season, Goldstein and Nebraska coach Jay Dirksen both believe the team has bonded better than in the past and

Nebraska's talent is at as high of a level as any time in the last few seasons.

Also, with Goldstein's leadership, Dirksen said he wouldn't be surprised to see a stronger finish to this year's season, adding that an NCAA bid could be in the works.

"She's doesn't like to lose, and she's pretty hard on herself," Dirksen said. "Like a lot of distance runners, she is exceptionally motivated and gets a little unrealistic."

"Sometimes you don't have to be No. 1 at everything you do. There is a process you have to go through to be a great athlete, but you have to just let it happen. But we have a mature group here."

Dirksen also is eager to see Goldstein have a healthy track season this year. For her last two, she suffered from anemia, sometimes unable to participate and making her an inconsistent performer. Her best mile time so far has been 5:11.05.

"I got really worn down," Goldstein said of her track season. "It's taught me to listen to my body and how to be patient and stick with it. It's not always easy for me to be

patient."

With her impatience comes an unrelenting perfectionism. Goldstein has consistently worked as hard as any of his athletes, Dirksen said.

Off the track, she has been named to the Big 12 Commissioner's Honor Roll four times, and she was a first-team Academic All-Big 12 honoree last year.

"I remember when she got her first B last year," Dirksen said. "She was upset, but I was happy. I was hoping it would relieve some of the pressure she puts on herself."

Actually it was a B-plus. Goldstein said the grade was the best she could have gotten in the organic chemistry class she tackled. A biochemistry major, she hopes to go to law school and become a patent lawyer for pharmaceutical companies. She got the idea from her father, Stu, and is excited about the prospects.

"At the student networking night I talked to someone and he said that it's a really up-and-coming career," Goldstein said.

It's just the sort of thing someone who trains regardless of the conditions would undertake. ■

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# 'Little' Brother

*Younger  
Dagunduro  
also likes to  
play defense*

**By Mike Babcock**

**C**ertainly, Ade Dagunduro was over-matched in size. After all, he's only 6-foot-5 and 195 pounds.

"Only" is a relative term, of course. Shang Ping is 6-10 and 230. So when the two went one-on-one recently in the university Rec Center, Dagunduro was giving up 5 inches and 35 pounds.

Not only that, Ping "didn't take it easy on me," said Dagunduro. "That's one thing I like about him. He's got a killer instinct. I can definitely testify to that. He's a competitor."

Dagunduro is a competitor, too. And that particular day, the new Cornhusker teammates "were just going at it" for the better part of two hours, he said.

Dagunduro is used to dealing with physically imposing opponents. He and his brother, Ola, often went against each other in playground pick-up games in Inglewood, Calif.

Ola played nose tackle for the Nebraska football team the past two seasons and now is trying to earn a job with the NFL's Dallas Cowboys as a free agent. He's 6-2 and 300-plus pounds.

Ade might have had a height advantage against his brother, but he was giving away weight. Their match-ups were intense, "pretty physical," Ade said. "He always used to . . . well, I said cheat. He said he wasn't cheating, just posting me up. He's got that huge size advantage. That made it tough."

Ade would shoot over Ola "and



Ade Dagunduro led Antelope Valley College in scoring, rebounding and steals.

use my speed to get around him. I was quicker than him, but not that much quicker because he was pretty quick growing up. He taught me a lot. He liked to bang down low. He helped me get tougher. So I owe a lot of my basketball skills to him."

The skills to which he referred include an appreciation for defense.

Most players measure their success by the points they score. But he takes satisfaction in limiting points.

He learned that in Inglewood, where "you got more recognition for stopping a guy rather than scoring on a guy," he said. "I don't like people to score on me, score on my team."

That attitude "also stems from my



football mentality," he said.

He played football in the ninth, 10th and 11th grades, then focused on basketball. The summer before his senior year he was working out with "a lot of alumni of Inglewood High School," including the Boston Celtics' Paul Pierce, "and they were telling me how I had the potential to be really good."

So he turned his attention to basketball. And he has never looked back.

After playing one season at Inglewood High, he went to Mt. San Antonio College, earning all-league recognition as a freshman. Then he transferred to Antelope Valley College in Lancaster, Calif. He led the Marauders to a runner-up finish in the Southern California region state tournament, averaging 18.7 points and 8.8 rebounds, both team highs. He also made a team-high 86 steals.

And his commitment to defense was reinforced by coach Dieter Horton.

"One thing he did was get me prepared for the Division I level," said Dagunduro. "Coach Horton, he runs

a Division I-style offense, a Division I-style defense. He helped me elevate my game because I was pretty raw. He elevated my game a lot to where I need to be successful on this level."

Miami offered a scholarship, he said, as did Penn State and UNLV. Southern California might have but it was waiting to see whether juniors Gabe Pruitt and Nick Young would declare for the NBA draft. As it turned out, they did. But Dagunduro wasn't going to wait around.

He picked Nebraska in part because of his brother's experience on the football team. In fact, that was a significant factor in his decision, although "I would say he doesn't like to admit it," Ade said.

"He never really tried to sway me in any direction because he didn't want that burden to be on him just in case things didn't work out. So he never really said, 'Go to Nebraska.' But him being here, obviously, I can see the path. He graduated from here, so the path was a little more clear."

Doc Sadler also was a significant factor, of course.

"He talked a lot about defense. He

said he's a tough-minded coach, so that was what appealed to me. I love getting out there, battling. I love playing defense," said Dagunduro. "But the main thing he talked about was, he's looking for leadership and taking the program to the next level."

Because he was a late addition to the recruiting class, Dagunduro hasn't seen the Cornhuskers practice. But the returning players have told him "it gets pretty intense."

That's as it should be, he said. "It's Division I basketball. Ain't no shortcuts here."

He arrived in July, as did freshman Brandon Richardson from Hawthorne, Calif., and has been on the go since then, taking classes in the second summer session and adjusting to Lincoln.

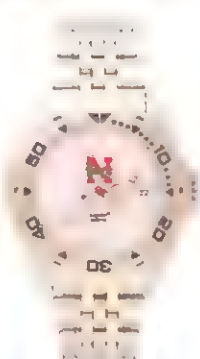
From the beginning, "it seemed like my life was planned from day to night. I was doing something every moment," he said. "That was the toughest thing, really, no free time."

Oh yes, going one-on-one with Ping was tough, too.

"He doesn't back down," Dagunduro said. ■



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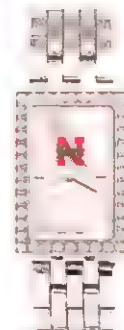
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Former Nebraska pitcher Joba Chamberlain was impressive in his debut as a reliever for the New York Yankees.

# New York State of Mind

**B**arry Bonds made the biggest news in baseball on the night of August 7, hitting the 756th home run of his career to break Hank Aaron's major league record. But earlier that night in Toronto, former Cornhusker Joba Chamberlain made big news in Nebraska, and certainly in his hometown of Lincoln.

Chamberlain made his major league debut, coming out of the New York Yankees' bullpen to pitch two scoreless innings and finish a 9-2 victory against the Toronto Blue Jays.

Future Hall of Famer Roger Clemens started the game for the Yankees and earned the victory, exiting in the seventh inning after being ejected for hitting a Blue Jays batter.

Chamberlain struck out two, including the first batter he faced (John McDonald), allowed one hit and walked two. He had been activated by the Yankees earlier that day.

A supplemental first-round pick in the 2006 Major League Draft, Chamberlain pitched two seasons at Nebraska after beginning his collegiate career in unimpressive fashion at Nebraska-Kearney. He earned All-America recognition as a sophomore, with a 10-2 record and 2.81 earned-run average.

He was 6-5 as a junior and finished his career with 232 strikeouts in 208 innings, fourth-best in school history. He struck out 10 or more batters eight times during his

Nebraska career.

The 41st pick in the draft, he was the first Cornhusker pitcher selected in the first round since Alvie Shepherd, a two-way player, was selected 21st overall by the Baltimore Orioles.

Chamberlain's rise to the Yankees was rapid. He began in the Hawaiian Winter League, where he was dominating, and opened the regular season with the Yankees' Class A team in Tampa, Fla. He was promoted to Class AA Trenton and then Class AAA Scranton/Wilkes Barre.

He also was chosen for the All-Star Futures Game.

He had a combined 9-2 record with a 2.45 ERA in 18 appearances with the three minor league teams. He began as a starter but was moved to the bullpen in anticipation of his being called up.

Yankee relievers had been struggling, blowing 15 saves before Chamberlain's arrival.

"It's one of those things that seemed to be crying out to happen because of what he's been doing," Yankees manager Joe Torre told the Associated Press of Chamberlain's promotion.

Chamberlain was the second Cornhusker to make his major league debut this season, of course. Alex Gordon, a teammate on Nebraska's College World Series team in 2005 and the second player selected in that year's draft, was in the Kansas City Royals lineup on opening day. ■

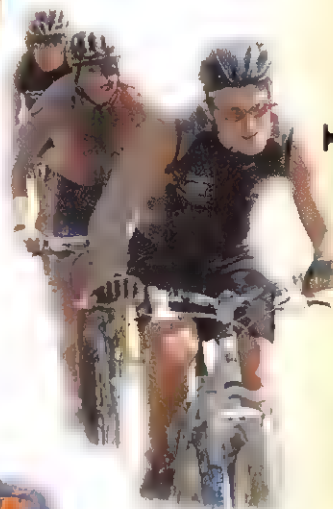


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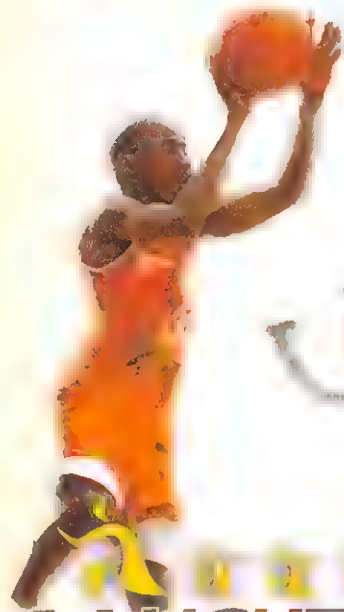


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# Texas and Missouri?

Texas was picked to win the South and Missouri the North in the Big 12 media preseason poll. The Longhorns and Tigers each received 16 first-place votes. Oklahoma received seven first-place votes and Texas A&M one in the South, while Nebraska received eight first-place votes in the North.

**SOUTH:** Texas 135 points, Oklahoma 126, Texas A&M 82, Oklahoma State 81, Texas Tech 56, Baylor 24.

**NORTH:** Missouri 136, Nebraska 128, Kansas State 88, Kansas 63, Colorado 58, Iowa State 31.

Cornhusker coach Bill Callahan respectfully, and not surprisingly, disagreed with the results of the poll. "My understanding is that the Big 12 writers essentially pick the team to win the division predicated on a number of factors," he said in San Antonio. "And the first factor is the quarterback."

Missouri has a returning starter at quarterback in Chase Daniel.

"Personally, no, I don't agree with it," Callahan said of the Missouri pick at the Big 12 Media Days in San Antonio in late July. "I love our football team, and I think they're capable of doing some great things. I understand how it all works and why people make the decisions and do the things that they do."

Missouri has a bye week prior to playing host to the Cornhuskers on Oct. 6. USC also has an off-week before playing Nebraska at Memorial Stadium on Sept. 15. "I think that's a little bit unusual," Callahan said of the bye-week situations. "We never encounter that early in the season."

In any case, "I don't want to take anything away from Missouri, and I certainly wouldn't want to take anything away from any of the competitors in the Big 12 North. Hope springs eternal for everybody at this time of year, and it's going to be competitive. It's going to be exciting."

The Big 12 championship game will be played on Dec. 1 at the Alamodome.

The Cornhuskers not only want to return to the conference championship game they want to win it. "I'm a senior and this is my last chance to win a Big 12 championship and see how far we can go," linebacker Bo Ruud said in San Antonio. "For me, I feel the urgency."

"I feel the need to give it everything we've got and to give it our best and to make that run at it because I think we can do it. Me, as a player, I want to go out as a winner. As a team, we want to leave our mark. We're not so much worried about any of the coaches' legacy as much as our

own. There's a real sense of urgency from the seniors because we've got one last chance. That's where I'm at."

## PRESEASON PICKS

Senior transfer Sam Keller still must earn the starting job at quarterback in competition with junior Joe Ganz, of course, a point Callahan reiterated during the Big 12 Media Days. Even so, conference-area media representatives selected Keller as the conference newcomer of the year.

Ruud and junior offensive guard Matt Slauson were named to the preseason all-conference first team.

Texas dominated the

team with seven selections, including conference offensive player of the year, sophomore quarterback Colt McCoy.

McCoy was the 2006 Big 12 Offensive Freshman of the Year.

Oklahoma cornerback Reggie Smith, a junior, was the preseason pick as the defensive player of the year and one of four Sooners selected to the all-conference first team.

**OFFENSE:** **WR** — Adarius Bowman, Oklahoma State; Limas Sweed, Texas. **TE** — Martin Rucker, Missouri. **OL** — Slauson; Tony Hills, Texas; Duke Robinson, Oklahoma; Anthony Collins, Kansas. **C** — Cody Wallace, Texas A&M; **QB** — McCoy. **RB** — Jamaal Charles, Texas; Mike Goodson, Texas A&M. **PK** — Garrett Hartley, Oklahoma. **KR** — Perrish Cox, Oklahoma State.

**DEFENSE:** **DL** — Ian Campbell, Kansas State; Frank Okam, Texas; Chris Harrington, Texas A&M; James McClinton, Kansas; Derek Lokey, Texas. **LB** — Ruud; Alvin Bowen, Iowa State; Jordon Dizon, Colorado. **DB** — Smith; Aqib Talib, Kansas; Marcus Watts, Kansas State; Marcus Griffin, Texas; **P** — Matt Fodge, Oklahoma State; **PR** — Smith.

## NATIONALLY SPEAKING

Nebraska was No. 19 in the coaches' preseason poll, announced in early August, one of four Big 12 schools included in the top 25. Sixty coaches voted in the poll, which had USC at No. 1.

The poll: 1. USC, 2. Louisiana State, 3. Florida, 4. Texas, 5. Michigan, 6. West Virginia, 7. Wisconsin, 8. Oklahoma, 9. Virginia Tech, 10. Ohio State, 11. Louisville, 12. California, 13. Georgia, 14. Auburn, 15. Tennessee, 16. Rutgers, 17. UCLA, 18. Penn State, 19. Nebraska, 20. Arkansas, 21. Florida State, 22. Texas Christian, 23. Boise State, 24. Hawaii, 25. Texas A&M.

## WHAT'S IN A NUMBER?

Though Keller wore a No. 5 jersey during spring practice, and had planned to wear a No. 2 jersey during what would have been his senior season at Arizona State if he hadn't transferred, he'll be wearing a No. 9 jersey this season, by choice.

Keller wore No. 9 throughout his high school football career in Danville, Calif., as well as during his first three seasons at Arizona State. He was going to set aside No. 9 at



Arizona State and wear No. 2 in honor of a high school teammate and friend who was seriously injured in an accident.

When he arrived at Nebraska, No. 9 was already assigned (on offense) to then-freshman wide receiver Will Henry. The two talked and Henry was "a good guy about it," said Keller.

The number switch couldn't be made in the spring, however.

Henry will wear No. 8 (no one wore that number last season, on either side of the ball), and I-back Marlon Lucky will wear No. 5 on offense, as will cornerback Armando Murillo on defense.

Safety Bryan Wilson again will wear No. 9 on defense.

Lucky wore No. 20 his first two seasons. No one has been assigned that number, which was once retired in honor of the Cornhuskers' first Heisman Trophy winner, Johnny Rodgers.

"I wanted something new," Lucky said in an interview with the Lincoln and Omaha newspapers prior to the start of training camp. "Johnny Rodgers made it big with the number (20). I just want to come in fresh out of the box with a new number and do what I do."

Keller also is happy. "I see No. 9 and I see myself," he said prior to spring practice.

Now, Cornhusker fans will see No. 9 and see him, too.

## AMONG THE MISSING

Craig Roark, one of three Oklahomans in the Cornhuskers' heralded 2005 recruiting class, requested and was granted a release from his scholarship in late July. The sophomore-to-be from Ada, Okla., battled injuries during his time at Nebraska. He was sidelined by a shoulder injury last fall and spring.

He arrived as an offensive lineman, where he played on the scout team as a freshman. He was moved to defensive line in the spring of 2006 and was listed as a back-up nose tackle.

Defensive linemen Demetrious Davis and Joseph Townsend, members of the 2007 recruiting class, won't be playing this fall. Davis, a three-star defensive tackle from Benton High in St. Joseph, Mo., is reportedly academically ineligible, while Townsend, a four-star tackle from Foothill (Calif.) Community College, plans to enroll in January, after qualifying academically.

Townsend would have three years to play three seasons. ■

# Quick Hits

## ANOTHER HOT TICKET

Nebraska's consecutive sellout streak at Memorial Stadium, a continuing NCAA record, is at 282 games and counting. The last non-sellout was Oct. 20, 1962.

The defending national champion Husker volleyball team is building its own tradition of consecutive sellouts at the Coliseum. The number is at 90 and counting. When individual tickets for this season's 14 matches at the Coliseum went on sale Aug. 1, they sold out in less than 45 minutes.

According to the Nebraska sports information office, some fans set up camp at the NU ticket office the previous afternoon, and a dozen people were waiting in line at midnight.

The Huskers also will play a match at the Devaney Sports Center (Hawaii, Oct. 21) and three matches at Qwest Center in Omaha this season. Tickets remained available for those matches. The matches in Omaha include two in the AVCA Showcase on Aug. 24-25 and against Penn State on Sept. 2.

## MORE VOLLEYBALL, BRIEFLY

Academic success, like fan interest, is a given with the volleyball program, which was among 56 nationally to receive the AVCA Team Academic Award for the 2006-07 season. Teams must have a cumulative 3.30 grade-point average during the academic year.

The Huskers received the award for a 12th time in its 15-year existence, the most among NCAA Division I programs. Eight members of the national championship team were first-team Academic All-Big 12 honorees and four were Academic All-District VII honorees.

The four were Sarah Pavan, Dani Busboom, Tracy Stalls and Amanda Gates.

Tara Mueller, a Husker freshman, started all seven matches at libero for the U.S. Junior National Team at the FIVB U-20 World Championships in Thailand in late July. The U.S. team finished fourth. Mueller ranked third among all players in the tournament with 36 digs.

The finish was the best for the U.S. team ever. Brazil won the gold medal.

Lee Maes, the Huskers' head assistant, coached the U.S. Junior National A2 Team to the gold medal at the 2007 European Global Challenge in Pula, Croatia in late July.

## SOFTBALL ADDITION

The Husker softball team added a catcher to its 2007-08 roster in late July: Amanda Duran, a two-time junior college All-American at Pima Community College in Tucson, Ariz. Duran, who is from Tucson, led Pima to a national title as a freshman, hitting .531 with 25 doubles, four triples, 21 home runs, 68 runs scored and 109 runs-batted-in. The 109 RBIs are the third-most in NJCAA history, which dates to 1989. The record is 122. Duran batted .441 with 17 home runs and 67 RBIs last season.

Incoming freshmen Ashley Guile and Kelli Link were named to the 2007 Louisville Slugger/NFCA High School All-America first team in mid-July. Guile, a repeat first-team selection, is a catcher from Olathe, Kan. Linke is an infielder from Lincoln, Neb.

The Husker roster includes five other freshmen: Julianne Brechtal, an infielder from Fullerton, Calif.; Tori Tyson, a right-handed pitcher from Corona, Calif.; Abby Hughes, a utility player from Olathe, Kan.; Heidi Foland, an infielder from Grand Island, Neb., and Sammi Liegl, an outfielder from Lincoln, Neb.

Liegl has been accepted for admission and will walk on.

## CONTRACT EXTENSION

Athletic director Steve Pederson's contract has been extended through June of 2013. Nebraska-Lincoln Chancellor Harvey Perlman announced the five-year extension in late July.

"In these days of close scrutiny of intercollegiate athletics, the university is fortunate to have someone as its athletic director who is committed to the overall development of student-athletes, has adopted sound financial management practices, and insists on the highest standards of compliance with university and NCAA rules," Perlman said in a release. "I am delighted that he has agreed to this extension."

## HI CONNECTION, SORT OF

After his contract was extended, Pederson announced a restructuring of the athletic department, including the hiring of former Lincoln (Neb.) Journal Star sports writer and columnist Randy York to serve as associate athletic director for strategic communications and chief communications officer.

York, who has spent the last 22 years in corporate communications for Sprint, was a multi-time Nebraska Sportswriter of the Year and also was an early contributor to Huskers Illustrated.

## FINISHING, BRIEFLY

● Former Cornhusker Mike Rozier, the 1983 Heisman Trophy winner, was inducted into the College Football Hall of Fame in South Bend, Ind., in mid-July.

"To be honest with you, I really didn't keep up with my stats when I played ball. My main thing was winning. We just wanted to win," Rozier told the South Bend Tribune.

● Bill Callahan on NFL Hall of Fame coach Bill Walsh, who died in late July at age 75: "Coach Walsh was incredibly creative and innovative, and he played a vital role in developing and modernizing the West Coast Offense as we know it today. A lot of successes I have enjoyed in the profession can be attributed to Coach Walsh and his principles of coaching and leadership. His legacy will continue to prosper well into the future." ■



# CROSSWORD

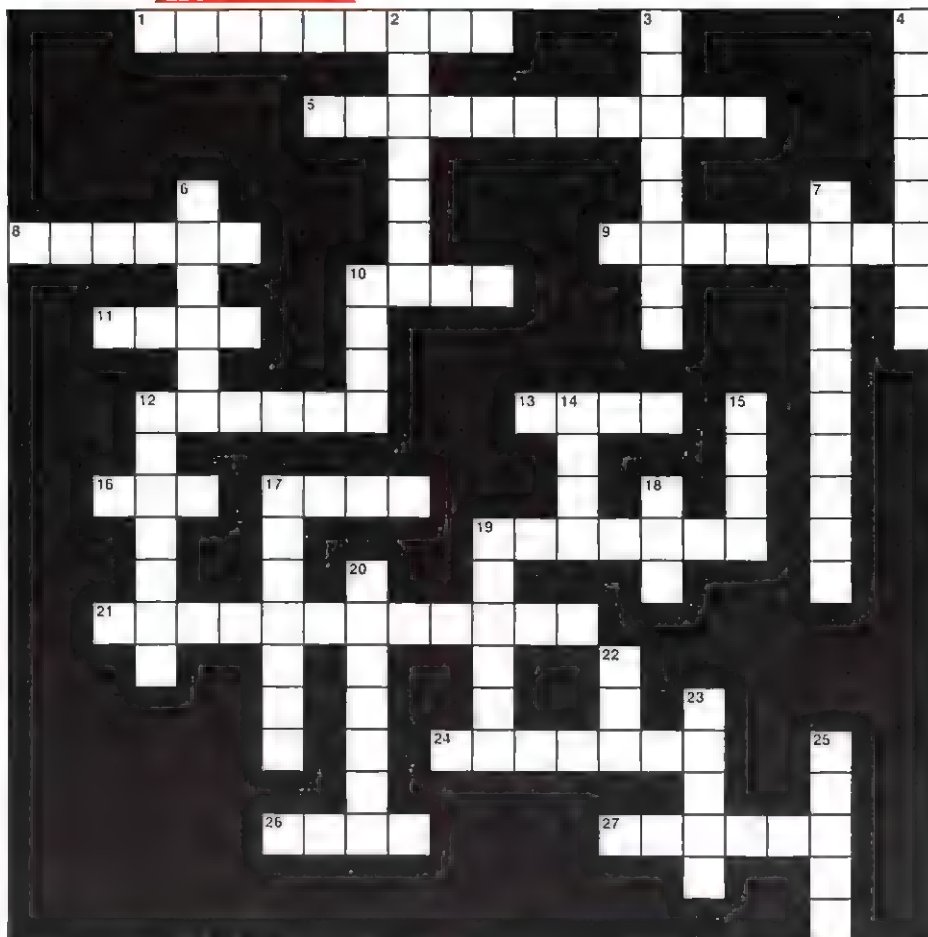
## ACROSS

- 1 First Big 12 opponent in 2007
- 5 Had 4 TDs in 5 catches in 2006
- 8 Cornerback who missed 2006 season
- 9 Nevada nickname
- 10 Quarterback from Illinois
- 11 Nevada's head coach
- 12 Had 11 pass breakups in 2006
- 13 2006 All-Big 12 (Coaches) linebacker
- 16 Network for NU Nevada telecast
- 17 Nevada campus location
- 19 Wears No. 70
- 21 Sam Keller's former school
- 24 Strength coach
- 26 Radio play-by-play announcer
- 27 Offensive coordinator

## DOWN

- 2 Brett Byford's home state
- 3 Corey McKeon's home state
- 4 First Husker selected in 2007 NFL Draft
- 6 2006 Big 12 Offensive Player of the Year
- 7 Nonconference road opponent
- 10 Running back recruit in 2008 class
- 12 Quarterback recruit in 2008 class
- 14 Jay Norvell's new school
- 15 Wears No. 83
- 17 Tight ends coach
- 18 Sept. 15 opponent
- 19 2006 interceptions leader
- 20 Brandon Jackson's NFL team
- 22 Quarterback who missed spring practice
- 23 Defensive line coach
- 25 Top 2006 tackler returning

Answers in Sept. 8 issue



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## JUNE/JULY CROSSWORD SOLUTION





# 10 YEARS AGO . . .

Huskers Illustrated looks back at some of the top stories of 1997

**August 1997:  
Volume 17, No. 7**

## BACK PAINS

Keeping the backfield healthy for an entire year has been a daunting task in the last couple of seasons. Will 1997 be any different?

## REUNITED

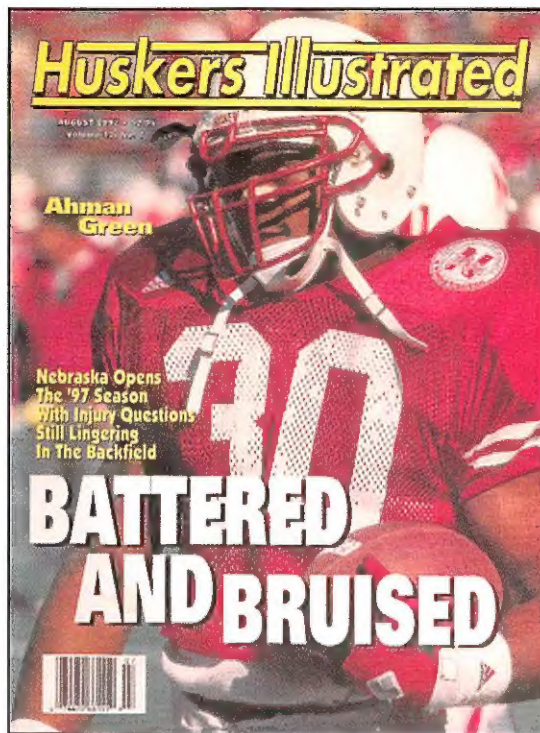
High school teammates Julius Jackson and Brandon Harrison join forces for the Black Shirts.

## AFTER SHOCK

Last season, the NU soccer team surprised many, going 23-1 in only its third year of existence. But what can it do for an encore in 1997?

## From BACK PAINS:

First, some good news about the running backs as Nebraska prepares to open the season against Akron on Aug. 30. Starting I-back Ahman Green is healthy, and not only that, he's "in as good a shape as I've ever seen him," assistant head coach and running backs coach Frank Solich said. "He looks tremendous."



Solich was speaking on the day the Cornhuskers were tested before beginning two-a-day practices. Green was second overall on the performance index, which is determined by factoring an athlete's weight with his scores in the 10-yard dash, the vertical jump and the pro agility drill.

Returning players aren't tested in the 40-yard dash in August because of the risk of injury. But there's no doubt Green has sufficient speed. He's already proven himself on that count.

His personal best in the 40 is 4.34, the second-fastest time in Cornhusker history.

Solich's enthusiasm for what he saw in Green on test day went beyond his scores. "I felt he's matured mentally, in terms of the style that he's going

about it (preparing) now," said Solich.

"Not that he didn't go about it the right way before. I just feel he's more intense. He's showing the leadership. He's doing everything that would indicate when you tie it in with his talent, he's going to have a great year. I think that's going to happen. I believe he's going to have a tremendous year."

And if tremendous is defined in relation to his first two seasons at Nebraska, well, consider . . . ■

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## No Lack Of Confidence

*Callahan likes his forth team  
but isn't into making predictions*



**Mike  
BABCOCK**

DURING TRAINING CAMP, the Nebraska football team broke its post-practice huddles with shouts of "National Championship." Players have confirmed as much.

(Reporters are kept at bay until the huddle is broken, as they should be.)

Winning a national title in Bill Callahan's fourth season as coach is a bit of a stretch, of course. The Cornhuskers need a Big 12 title and a BCS Bowl bid first. That would be the

next step in what has been progress, as defined by wins and losses, in each of the past two seasons.

Still, shouting "National Championship" is significant, realistic or not. One need only look at the program's drive to three national titles in Tom Osborne's final four seasons as coach.

Until the early 1990s, Osborne's teams never openly acknowledged a national title as the goal. Osborne stressed controlling what could be controlled, winning the conference. National championship talk was considered unseemly, even if it were kept within the team.

And remember here, post-practice huddles aren't intended to be public events.

By 1993, the Cornhuskers were acknowledging a goal that was in some ways out of their control. Without a playoff, national championships had to be awarded. They couldn't be won.

If you could go back and listen to player interviews from that time, you would hear the shift, which was subtle in most cases, though not all. And in that sense, the change can be traced further back, characterized by one player (at the risk of oversimplification) — Broderick Thomas.

The "Sandman" was brash, never keeping his thoughts or goals to himself. He's the one who proclaimed Memorial Stadium "our house." He challenged rival Oklahoma, word for word. And, most important of all, he was passionate and committed to backing up everything he said.

Teammate Steve Taylor wasn't as vocal as Thomas, not nearly. But his focus was national in scope, too. And there were others, as well, who influenced the program.

The influence was this: To accomplish something you first have to verbalize it. And they did that, although they weren't around when an Osborne team reached the pinnacle in 1994.

Acknowledging the goal didn't mean the team lost its game-to-game focus, however. Osborne wouldn't have allowed it. In fact, the focus was practice-to-practice, station-to-station. Callahan is no different. Every coach is that way, or soon finds himself making a living some other way.

So when Callahan was asked, during his pre-training camp news conference, the importance of his fourth season

in measuring progress in the program, he responded as most coaches would.

"Every year's important to me, every year," he replied. "And every win's important to me, so whether it's three, four, five, we're going to do the best we can. That's how we've discussed it, and that's how we go about our business. We don't, and I don't personally, talk to the staff and start talking about 'year four' and start pounding the table and screaming and yelling. I think everybody understands."

"It's about consistency. And it's about elevating your performance. That's our goal. Our goals internally, I mean, they're very high for our team and our staff. We want to get better every year. So whatever year it is, year one, year six, year 12, we just want to keep getting better."

There's the catch for a coach. Often, "getting better" is defined by wins and losses. But Nebraska has reached a point at which increasing the number of wins is difficult. Callahan's teams have gone 5-6 (3-5 Big 12), 8-4 (4-4) and 9-5 (6-2). The progress has been clear and measurable.

Less measurable but more important in the long run is the upgrade in talent, a significant expectation when Callahan was hired and one he has met with aggressive recruiting nationally, without sacrificing attention to in-state athletes and walk-ons, which must be the program's foundation.

Callahan wouldn't say this is the best team he's had at Nebraska.

"That asks for a prediction," he said. "You want me to make a bold statement, and I'm not into that. I'm just trying to make our team . . . the best we

can potentially and possibly be. It's not a lack of confidence, believe me; I love our guys. They've worked hard. They're a solid group of guys. As long as we continue to do what we're doing, there will be that opportunity down the road."

This is intrinsically his best team, based on the talent upgrade and the depth that represents. But in this day and age, in a BCS conference with scholarship limits and a resulting move toward parity, an injury or two can change the landscape quickly. Callahan can't control that.

He can't control wins and losses and shouldn't be measured by them. After recruiting the athletes, he can only control preparation and planning — and, to some degree, effort.

Acknowledging those things, the outside optimism surrounding his fourth season is justified. His is a program on the rise. As such, post-practice-huddle shouts of "National Championship" are appropriate, though at this point more for direction than destination. But hey, you never know. ■



**Bill Callahan's first three  
NU teams have a combined  
record of 22-15.**

*Mike Babcock is a former sports columnist for the Lincoln Journal Star. He has covered Nebraska football for nearly 30 years. Mike can be reached at MBABCOCK1@neb.rr.com or P.O. Box 6782, Lincoln, NE 68506.*



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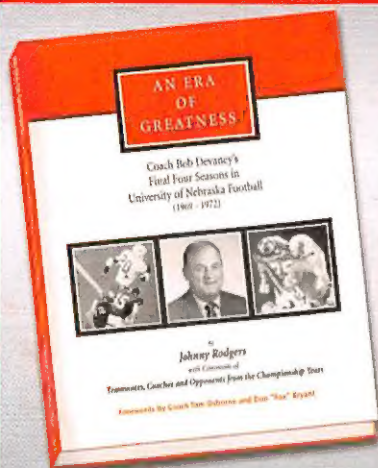
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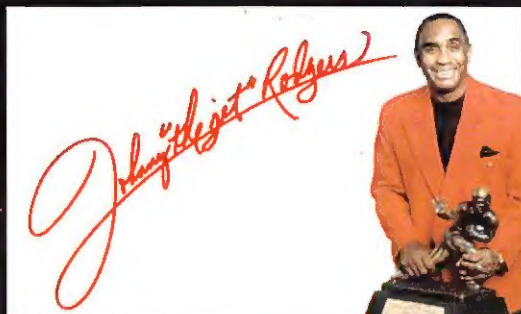
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